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THE

POETRY OF TENNYSON

BY

HENRY VAN DYKE

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To
A Young Woman
OF AN OLD FASHION
WHO LOVES ART
NOT FOR ITS OWN SAKE
BUT BECAUSE IT ENNOBLES LIFE
WHO READS POETRY
NOT TO KILL TIME
BUT TO FILL IT WITH BEAUTIFUL THOUGHTS
AND WHO STILL BELIEVES
IN GOD AND DUTY AND IMMORTAL LOVE
I dedicate
THIS BOOK

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PREFACE.

THE preface is that part of a book which comes last to the author and first to the reader. And if I may go so far as to assume — merely as a working hypothesis — the existence of a reader for this book, I should like to say a few words about the spirit and purpose in which it has been written.

The title was chosen to set a bound to the author's discursiveness, and to be an encouragement to the reader's patience. It is meant to tell not only what the book contains, but also what it omits. One thing that will not be found here is a biography of the poet, or a collection of anecdotes in regard to his private affairs.

The time to write a life of Tennyson has not yet arrived ; and those who love him pray that it may be long on the way. When it

does come, it will offer no allurements to the seeker of sensations and no excuse to the purveyor of scandals. A life that has been spent, not in the chase of notoriety, but in the nobler pursuit of true glory,—a life that is free from the shadow of those mysterious problems which have darkened the graves of some poets and drawn the vultures around them in flocks,—a life that has flowed strong and straight and clear,

Like some broad river rushing down alone,
With the selfsame impulse wherewith he was thrown
From his loud fount upon the echoing lea, —

surely such a life is the happiest and the best, and it deserves to be treated by the world with gentleness and honour and that divine reticence which is the mark of noble minds.

For my own part, I am of opinion that the best biography of Tennyson will always be found in his works. His poems are his life. And I cannot help recalling the words which he wrote me a few months ago: *I think it wisest in a man to do his work in the world*

as quietly and as well as he can, without much heeding the praise or dispraise.

The reader of this book will find in the appendix a brief record of such facts and dates as may be helpful in studying the work of the poet, and a bibliography more complete than any that has yet been published; but not one word in these pages, I hope, which would either awaken or feed an idle personal curiosity.

Nor does this book contain an analysis of Tennyson's poems. It is meant to be something less and something more than that. For there is a distinction to be drawn between a man's poems and his poetry. Even those who love Tennyson most and can read with pleasure everything that he has written, those who feel the subtle charm of his style so strongly that they are quite willing to be called Tennysonians,—and with that company the present writer claims fellowship,—even they must feel desirous that the poet should be judged, not by his first work, nor by his last work, but by his best

work. Take, for example, his later poems. Many of them, like *Rizpah*, and *The Revenge*, and *The Ancient Sage*, and the lines *To Virgil*, and parts of the second *Locksley Hall*, are vigorous, splendid, unsurpassed in their kind by anything in English literature. The slight critics who sneered at them as the work of an old man, and welcomed them with a general chorus of "Go up, thou bald head," only condemned themselves, and made us regret that since the days of Elisha the bears have allowed one of their most beneficent functions to fall into disuse.

But after all, the lasting fame and influence of Tennyson must rest upon the great works into which he has put the fulness of his strength and the freshness of his art; and even in these, the chief thing to be considered is not the poem, but the poetry; the soul of beauty and power which makes them live. Of this a man cannot well write without going beyond the letter of his text and uttering some of his own deepest con-

victions in regard to art and religion and human life.

I suppose and hope that this book holds such an utterance. I should be sorry to have any one take it merely as a collection of critical essays. It does, indeed, contain a certain amount of work which belongs entirely to criticism, and some of which has never been done before. The analysis of the changes in *The Palace of Art*; the history of the order of production of *The Idylls of the King*, and the attempt to show that they are not an allegory; the full table of Biblical allusions and quotations in the poems of Tennyson,—these are contributions to the careful study of the technique of a poet who has become a classic in his own lifetime. But beginning with the second essay in this book, I have not hesitated to express with freedom, and with such clearness as I could attain, those opinions in regard to the meaning of life and the province of art, without which it is not possible to form any true judgment of the

value of a poet's work. I do not desire to sail under false colours, or even under a dubious flag. There need be no doubt, at least, in regard to the standpoint from which this book is written.

Poetry is a part of life, and a most important part. The late Mr. Matthew Arnold used to say, in his large and suggestive way, *The future of poetry is immense*. That is certainly true; but the question still remains, What is to be the poetry of the future? There are many who tell us that it will be something new and strange. Some say that it will shake off all the old laws of melody and measure, and care nothing for beauty of form. Others say that it will care for nothing else; that its only merit will be sensuous beauty; that it will empty itself of all moral meaning, and have no message for the soul of man. The adherents of an older creed — who stand midway between these new teachers, as it were between the devil and the deep sea — may well take comfort in the dissension of their

adversaries, and, leaving them to fight out their battle, rest satisfied with the belief that the world always has loved, and always will love, poetry that is poetical. And surely this means something which cannot be produced either by bald realism or by dainty æstheticism. It means something musical and creative and ideal; something which ennobles life and fills time with beautiful thoughts.

Poetry is, in truth, the prophetic art.

It is an art because its first object is to give pleasure through the perfection of form. Without delight it is a vain thing. The world will never really care for it. A man may be as wise as Solomon, as honest as Diogenes, as instructive as the Encyclopedia, but unless he can learn to write without roughness or obscurity or tediousness, unless he can lend to his verse that subtle charm of style which comes from the harmony of measured sounds, the world will say to him, with Heine: *Das hättest du Alles sehr gut in guter Prosa sagen können.*

It is the prophetic art, because its highest object is to convey to the mind of man a message which shall lift him up above himself and make him not only happier but better. After all, the most perfect pleasure is that which accompanies the purification of the heart through pity and fear and love. The world will not be fully satisfied with anything less. And only of those men who can bring a meaning into life, touch it with glory and link it to immortality, will the world say, *These are my great poets.*

If, then, any one shall ask why I have written this book, let him take this for answer. The first reason is because I believe in the power of poetry to cheer and sweeten and elevate human life. I had rather have my children grow up thinking that the earth is flat and that light is a liquid, than have them grow up without a love for true poetry.

The second reason is because I believe that Tennyson is one of the great poets, — great in the clarity and beauty and nobil-

ity of his style ; great in the breadth of his human sympathy ; great in the truth with which he has expressed the hopes and fears of this century ; great, above all, in the faith with which he has voiced the great reaction out of the heart of a doubting age, towards the Christianity of Christ and the trust in Immortal Love.

In the future, when men call the roll of poets who have given splendour to the name of England, they will begin with Shakspere and Milton, — and who shall have the third place, if it be not Tennyson ?

NEW YORK CITY,
October, 1889.

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THE FIRST FLIGHT.

THE POETRY OF TENNYSON.

THE FIRST FLIGHT.

THE advent of a true poet usually bears at least one mark of celestial origin — he “cometh not with observation.” A small volume is printed on some obscure press ; the friends to whom it is sent, “with the compliments of the author,” return thanks for it in words which compromise truth with affection ; the local newspaper applauds it in a perfunctory way ; some ogre of a critic, whose appetite for young poets is insatiable, may happen to make a hasty and savage meal of it ; or some kindly reviewer, who is always looking on the hopeful side of literature, may discover in it the buds of promise. But this is mainly a matter of chance : the certainty is that there will be few to buy the book with hard cash, and fewer still to read it, except from curiosity or friendship, and that the great world will roll on its way as

serenely as if nothing of consequence had occurred.

Somewhat after this fashion most of the leading English poets have arrived. There was no great stir made by the publication of *Descriptive Sketches*, or *Hours of Idleness*. The announcement of *Original Poems by Victor and Cazire* did not produce any excitement. Even *Venus and Adonis* failed to inform the public that the creator of *Hamlet* and *Othello* had appeared. The recognition of genius in a first flight rarely takes place at the proper time ; it is reserved for those prophets who make their predictions after the event.

But surely there never was a poet of rank who slipped into print more quietly than the junior author of *Poems by Two Brothers*. The book was published in 1827, for J. & J. Jackson of Louth, and W. Simpkin & B. Marshall of London. The title-page bore a modest motto from Martial : *Hæc nos novimus esse nihil*. The preface repeated the same sentiment in more diffuse language.

“ The following Poems were written from the ages of fifteen to eighteen, not conjointly but individually ; which may account for their differences of style and matter. To

light upon any novel combination of images, or to open any vein of sparkling thought, untouched before, were no easy task: indeed the remark itself is as old as the truth is clear: and no doubt if submitted to the microscopic eye of periodical criticism, a long list of inaccuracies and imitations would result from the investigation. But so it is: we have passed the Rubicon and we leave the rest to fate; though its edict may create a fruitless regret that we ever emerged from 'the shade' and courted notoriety."

That was surely a most gentle way of passing the Rubicon. The only suggestion of a flourish of trumpets was the capital P in poems. Fate, who sat smiling on the bank, must have been propitiated by a bow so modest and so awkward. Not even the names of the young aspirants for public favour were given; and only the friends of the family could have known that the two brothers who thus stepped out, hand in hand, from "the shade," were Charles and Alfred Tennyson.

It is difficult to conjecture — unless, indeed, we are prepared to adopt some wild theory of the disinterested benevolence of publishers — what induced the Jacksons to

pay ten pounds in good money for the privilege of printing this book. But if they were alive to-day, and had kept a sufficient number of the first edition on their shelves, their virtue would have its reward. For I must confess to having paid as much for a single copy as they gave for the copyright ; and as prices go it was an excellent bargain.

Here it is : a rather stout little volume of two hundred and thirty-eight pages, paper not of the finest, print not without errors. It contains one hundred and two pieces of verse, in all sorts of metres, and imitated after an amazing variety of models. There is nothing very bad and nothing very inspiring. *The Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* came as near to the truth as one can expect of a newspaper when it said : “This volume exhibits a pleasing union of kindred tastes and contains several little pieces of considerable merit.” That is the only contemporary criticism which has been exhumed. And it would be absurd, at this late day, to turn the “microscopic eye,” of which the brothers were so needlessly afraid, upon their immature production. To reprint it without Tennyson’s consent, even in this country where literary piracy is protected by

statute, would be morally criminal ; to discuss it seriously and in detail as a poetical work would be foolish.

And yet, to one who can find a pleasure in tracing the river to its narrow source among the hills, this book is precious and well worth reading. For somewhere between these covers, hardly to be distinguished from the spring of that twin-rivulet of verse which ran so brief a course in the *Sonnets* of Charles Tennyson, lies the fountain-head of that deeper, clearer stream which has flowed forth into *In Memoriam* and *The Idylls of the King*, and refreshed the English-speaking world for more than sixty years with the poetry of Alfred Tennyson. Here, then, we may pause for a moment, and glance at some of the impulses which led him to commence poet, and the influences which directed his earliest efforts.

It seems to me that the most interesting and significant thing about this little book is the fact that the two brothers appear in it together. For this tells us a great deal in regard to the atmosphere of the home in which Tennyson's boyhood was passed. The seven sons and five daughters of the Rector of Somersby were not ordinary children ;

nor was their education conducted in that dull, commonplace, Gradgrind spirit which so often erases all originality out of a child. The doors of the ideal world were opened to them very early; they were encouraged to imagine as well as to think; they peopled their playgrounds with lofty visions of kings and knights, and fought out the world-old battles of right and wrong in their childish games, and wove their thoughts of virtue and courage and truth into long romances with which they entertained each other in turn at the dinner-table. The air of the house was full of poetry. Charles, the second son, was probably the leader in this life of fancy. It was he, at all events, who first directed his brother Alfred, his junior by a year, into the poetic path. One Sunday morning, when Alfred was to be left at home alone, Charles gave him a slate and bade him write some verses about the flowers in the garden. The task was eagerly accepted, and when the family had returned from church, the little boy came with his slate all written over with lines of blank verse to ask for his brother's approval. Charles read them over gravely and carefully, with the earnestness of a childish critic. Then he

gave the slate back again, saying, “Yes, you can write.” It was a very kindly welcome to the world of poetry, and I doubt whether Alfred Tennyson ever heard a word of praise that filled him with more true delight than this fraternal recognition.

Having found each other as kindred spirits, the two boys held closely together. They were intimate friends. They helped and cheered and criticised each other in their common studies and writings. It is a good omen for genius when it is capable of fraternity. It is the best possible safeguard against eccentricity and morbidness and solitary pride. Charles Lamb was right when he wrote to Coleridge: “O my friend, cultivate the filial feelings! and let no man think himself released from the kind charities of relationship.” Tennyson’s best work has never lost the insight of the heart. And if there were no other reason for valuing these *Poems by Two Brothers*, I should still prize them as the monument of a brotherly love to which the poet has paid this exquisite tribute in *In Memoriam*:

But thou and I are one in kind,
As moulded like in Nature’s mint;
And hill and wood and field did print
The same sweet forms on either mind.

For us the same cold streamlet curl'd
Thro' all his eddying coves ; the same
All winds that roam the twilight came
In whispers of the beauteous world.

At one dear knee we proffer'd vows ;
One lesson from one book we learn'd,
Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turn'd
To black and brown on kindred brows.
And so my wealth resembles thine.

Another noticeable feature in this book is the great number of quotations from modern and classical authors. Almost all of the poems have mottoes. I glance over them at random and find scraps from Virgil, Addison, Gray, Clare, Cicero, Horace, Moore, Byron, Milton, Racine, Claudian, Rousseau, Scott, Hume, Ossian, Lucretius, Sallust, and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Of a truth these schoolboys must have read well, if not wisely. Moreover, there are footnotes, in which they tell us that "FIGHT is a word used by Spenser and Shakespeare," and that "none but the priests could interpret the Egyptian hieroglyphics," and that "Ponce de Leon discovered Florida when he was in search of the fabled fountain of youth," and that "Apollonius Rhodius was not born at Alexandria, but at Naucratis." The display of learning is so immense that it becomes

amusing ; but it is not without significance, for it distinctly marks Tennyson as one of those who, like Milton, were students before they were poets, and whose genius did not develop in solitude but in

Converse with all forms
Of the many-sided mind.

The volume abounds, as I have already said, in imitations ; indeed, there is hardly a piece in it which does not sound like an echo of some other poet. The influence which is most clearly marked is that of Byron. He is quoted six times. There is a strong flavour of his dramatic melancholy in such lines as,

I wander in darkness and sorrow,
Unfriended and cold and alone ;

or,

I stand like some lone tower
Of former days remaining,
Within whose plaece of power
The midnight owl is plaining.

It is evident that this grief could not have been very real to a schoolboy between fifteen and eighteen. It was like the gloom of Shakespeare's young gentleman of France who was " sad as night only for wantonness." And the fashion of the sadness was learned

from the author of *Childe Harold*. His metrical manner also is copied with undisguised enthusiasm. The lad who wrote,

Thou shalt come like a storm when the moonlight is dim,
And the lake's gloomy bosom is full to the brim;
Thou shalt come like the flash in the darkness of night,
When the wolves of the forest shall howl with affright,

had certainly been captured by the Assyrian who came down like the wolf on the fold. In addition to these tokens of the sincerest flattery, there is a poem on *The Death of Lord Byron*, which begins :

The hero and the bard is gone !
His bright career on earth is done,
Where with a comet's blaze he shone.

After reading all this it is interesting to hear Tennyson tell, in his own words, spoken many years afterward, how the news of that death had affected him. “Byron was dead. I thought the whole world was at an end. I thought everything was over and finished for every one — that nothing else mattered. I remember, I walked out alone and carved, ‘Byron is dead’ into the sandstone.”

The spell of this passionate devotion soon passed away, but perhaps we can see some lingering trace of its effects in poems as late as *Locksley Hall* and *Maud*. Indeed, I

think the influence of Byron upon Tennyson has been generally underrated, if not completely ignored.

There are a few other points of interest in this rare little volume. For instance, the variety of metrical forms indicates an unusual freedom and catholicity of taste. The result of such a miscellaneous admiration of all styles, from the finish of Horace to the formlessness of Ossian, might possibly be nothing better than a facility in general imitation, the fluency of a successful parodist. But if a boy had real genius it would lead him on to try experiments in many metres until he mastered those which were best fitted to express his thoughts, and gave new life to obsolete forms of verse, and finally, perhaps, created some original form. And this, in fact, is what Alfred Tennyson has done. He has attempted almost every kind of measure. And though his early efforts were so far unsuccessful that so good a judge as Coleridge remarked that "he had begun to write poetry without knowing what metre was," yet in the end he made himself the most musical of English singers. A promise, or, at least, a hint of this result is contained in the *Poems by Two Brothers*, and I can-

not help conjecturing, on this ground alone, that the pieces in this volume which show the greatest freedom and rapidity, and even uncertainty, of movement, like *The Vale of Bones*, *Persia*, *The Old Sword*, and *Antony to Cleopatra*, are the work of Alfred rather than of Charles.

But there are also other indications which help us in guessing at the authorship of particular pieces. Of course we cannot be quite sure of them. But here and there we find a thought, a phrase, which the Laureate has used again in his maturer works, and which may possibly mark some of these earlier efforts as belonging to him. I will give a few illustrations of these parallel passages.

In *Remorse* we find the lines :

To life, whose every hour to me
Hath been increase of misery.

The Two Voices gives us the same thought :

Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be ?

In *Midnight* there is a reference to

the glutting wave
That saps eternally the cold gray steep ;

which reminds us of

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O sea.

In the lines *On the Death of my Grandmother* we read :

Her faith like Stephen's, softened her distress.

The comparison is used again in *The Two Voices* :

Like Stephen, an unquenchèd fire.

In *Switzerland* the poet cries :

O! when shall Time
Avenge the crime?

and in *The Vision of Sin* he says again :

It was a crime
Of sense, avenged by sense that wore with time.

In the poem on *Sublimity* the phrase, "Holds communion with the dead," may have been written by the hand that afterward wrote the same phrase in *In Memoriam*.

In *Egypt* we find :

The first glitter of his rising beams
Falls on the broad-bas'd pyramids sublime.

The epithet recurs in *A Fragment*, printed in an annual in 1830 :

The great pyramids,
Broad-bas'd amid the fleeting sands.

Other passages might be quoted to show the connection between Tennyson's earlier and later work. It is one of his characteristics

that he uses the same image more than once, and that the repetition is almost always an improvement. But it will be more profitable to close this essay with a few lines which are worthy to be remembered for their own merits, and which, we may conjecture, on internal evidence, belong to the first genuine poetry of Alfred Tennyson. There is a touch of reality in this :

The tolling of thy funeral bell,
The nine low notes that spoke thy knell,
I know not how I bore so well,
My Brother!

True and broad descriptive power is shown in such lines as these :

Like some far fire at night
Along the dun deep streaming.

A wan, dull, lengthen'd sheet of swimming light
Lies the broad lake —

The thunder of the brazen prows
O'er Actium's ocean rung.

But perhaps the passage which exhibits the most sustained vigour of expression is found in the poem entitled *Persia*. It is a description of the great king contemplating the ruin of his empire. He spreads the dust upon his laurelled head, as he is forced

To view the setting of that star
Which beam'd so gorgeously and far

O'er Anatolia, and the fane
Of Belus, and Caïster's plain,
 And Sardis, and the glittering sands
 Of bright Pactolus, and the lands
Where Crœsus held his rich domain ;
And further east, where broadly roll'd
Old Indus pours his streams of gold ;
And southward to Cilicia's shore,
Where Cydnus meets the billows' roar ;
And northward far to Trebizonde
 Renown'd for kings of chivalry,
Where Hyssus rolling from the strand
 Disgorges in the Euxine Sea —
The Euxine, falsely named, which whelms
The mariner in the heaving tide —
To high Sinope's distant realms
Where cynics rail'd at human pride.

This is not perfect poetry ; but it is certainly strong verse. It is glorified nomenclature. Milton himself need not have blushed to acknowledge it. The boy who could write like this before he was eighteen years old knew something, at least, of the music and magic of names. If we may read our history, like our Hebrew, backward, we can detect the promise of a great poet in the swing and sweep of these lines, and recognize the wing-trial of genius, in Tennyson's first flight.

THE PALACE OF ART.

THE PALACE OF ART.

THE year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty-three was a period of waiting and uncertainty in English literature. Twelve years had passed since the brief, bright light of Keats went out at Rome ; eleven years, since the waters of Spezzia's treacherous bay closed over the head of Shelley ; nine years, since the wild flame of Byron's heart burned away at Missolonghi ; a few months, since the weary hand of Scott had at last let fall the wizard's wand. The new leaders were dead ; the old leaders were silent. Wordsworth was reclining on the dry laurels of his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* at Rydal Mount ; Coleridge was pacing up and down the garden-path at Highgate talking transcendental metaphysics ; Southey had ceased writing what he called poetry ; Thomas Moore was warbling his old songs to an audience which had almost begun to weary of them. The coming man had not yet arrived. Dickens was a short-hand re-

porter in the House of Commons ; Thackeray was running through his property in the ruinous dissipation of newspaper-publishing ; Carlyle was wrestling with poverty and the devil at Craigenputtock ; Robert Browning, a youth of twenty, was travelling in Italy ; Matthew Arnold and Arthur Clough were boys at Rugby ; William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne were yet unborn. In this somewhat barren and unpromising interval, the poetical reputation of Mr. Alfred Tennyson, late of the University of Cambridge, was trembling in the balance of Criticism.

Criticism with a large C, you will please to observe ; for the reign of their mighty Highnesses, the Reviewers, was still unshaken. Seated upon their lofty thrones in London and Edinburgh, they weighed the pretensions of all new-comers into their realms with severity if not with impartiality, and meted out praise and blame with a royal hand. In those rude days there was no trifling with a book in little "notices" of mild censure or tepid approbation, — small touehes which, if unfavourable, hardly hurt more than pin-pricks, and if favourable, hardly help more than gentle pats upon

the head. That is the suave, homœopathic method of modern times: but then — in the days of Herod the king — it was either the accolade or decapitation. Many an innocent had the dreadful Gifford slaughtered, and though he had done his last book, there were other men, like Wilson and Croker and Lockhart, who still understood and practiced the art of speedy dispatch. *Blackwood* and *The Quarterly* still clothed themselves with Olympian thunder,

“ And that two-handed engine at their door,
Stood ready to smite once and smite no more.”

It was before this stern tribunal that young Tennyson had made his appearance in 1830 with a slim volume of *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. They were fifty-three in number, and covered only one hundred and fifty-four pages; yet within that narrow compass at least a score of different metres were attempted with amazing skill, and the range of subjects extended from *The Mermaid* to *Supposed Confessions of a Secondary Sensitive Mind not in Unity with Itself*. One can easily imagine the confusion and scorn which the latter title must have excited in the first-rate unsensitive mind of an orthodox Edinburgh Reviewer. Nor were

the general style and quality of the poems calculated to mollify these feelings. Dainty in finish, pre-raphaelite in their minute painting of mosses and flowers and in their super-subtle shading of emotions, musical yet irregular, modern in sentiment, yet tinged with some archaic mannerisms, the poems taken altogether concealed the real strength of some of them (such as *Mariana*, *The Poet*, *Ode to Memory*, and *The Deserted House*,) under an appearance of delicacy and superficiality. Arthur Henry Hallam praised them, but that counted for nothing, because he was Tennyson's friend. *The Westminster Review* praised them, but that counted for little, because it belonged to the party of literary revolt. Leigh Hunt praised them, but that counted for worse than nothing, because he was the arch-heretic of poetry, the leader of the so-called "Cockney school." The authoritative voice of Criticism was not heard until "Christopher North" took up the new poet in *Blackwood*, and administered the castigation which he thought most necessary and salutary. Mingling a little condescending encouragement with his condemnation, and holding out the hope that if "Alfred" would only

reform his style and get rid of his eoekney admirers he might some day write something worth reading, the stern magister set to work in the meantime to demolish the dainty lyrics. Drivel, and more dismal drivel, and even more dismal drivel was what he called them; and in winding up his remarks upon the song entitled *The Owl*, he said: "Alfred himself is the greatest owl; all he wants is to be shot, stuffed, and stuck in a glass ease, to be made immortal in a museum."

Of a truth this was Criticism in what Macaulay used to eall the Big Bow-wow style,— small sense and large noise. Six months after this article was printed, in December, 1832, Mr. Tennyson put out his seeond volume. Its title-page ran as follows: *Poems by Alfred Tennyson. London: Edward Moxon, 64, New Bond Street. MDCCCXXXIII.* It is, thercrefore, properly speaking, the edition of 1833.

It lies on my desk now, a slender volume of one hundred and sixty-three pages, with Barry Cornwall's autograph on the fly-leaf, and his pencil-marks running all along the margins. It eontains only thirty poems, but among them are *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *Œnone*, *The Palace*

of Art, The Lotos-Eaters, and A Dream of Fair Women.

It was evident at once that the young poet had not changed his style, though he had enriched it. Fuller and stronger were his notes, more manly and of a wider range; but his singing was still marked by the same lyrical freedom, the same delicacy of imagination, the same exquisite and unconventional choice of words, the same peculiar blending of the classic with the romantic spirit,—qualities which to us have become so familiar that we can hardly realize how fresh and strange they must have seemed to the readers of half a century ago. It was clear enough that this new writer was no mere disciple of Leigh Hunt, or neophyte of the Cockney school, to be frightened back into the paths of propriety by brutal thunders. He might be moving on the same lines which Keats had begun to follow, but he was going beyond his leader; he was introducing a new spirit and method into English verse; he bid fair to become the master of a new school of poetry. In the opinion of the reviewers he needed to be dealt with mildly, but firmly. And this time it was not “crusty Christopher,” but a

more dangerous critic, who undertook the task. The review of Tennyson's poems which appeared in the *Quarterly* for July, 1833, is one of the cleverest and bitterest things ever written, and though unacknowledged, it has always been attributed to the editor, James Gibson Lockhart, sometimes called "the scorpion," because of a certain peculiarity in the latter end of his articles.

He begins in a tone of ironical compliment, apologizing for never having seen Mr. Tennyson's first volume, and proposing to repair his unintentional neglect by now introducing to the admiration of sequestered readers "a new prodigy of genius, another and a brighter star of that galaxy or *milky way* of poetry of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger." He proceeds to offer what he calls "a tribute of unmixed approbation," and selecting a few specimens of Mr. Tennyson's singular genius, "to point out now and then the peculiar brilliancy of some of the gems that irradiate his poetical crown." This means, in plain words, to hold up the whole performance to ridicule by commanding its weakest points in extravagant mock-laudation, and passing over its best points in silence. A method

more unfair and exasperating can hardly be imagined. It is like applauding a musician for every false note. Lockhart's "unmingled approbation" was a thousand times more severe than old Christopher's blunt and often clumsy abuse. It was as if one had praised Pope for his amiable temper, or Wordsworth for his keen sense of humour.

And yet,—after all,—in spite of the malicious spirit and the unjust method of the article,—we may as well be honest and confess that on many points Lockhart was right. His hard, formal, opinionated, Caledonian mind could not possibly appreciate the merits of Tennyson, but it could and it did detect the blemishes of his earlier work. In almost every case the shaft of the reviewer's irony found the joint in the poet's armour and touched some vulnerable spot.

The proof of this is furnished by Tennyson himself. For ten years he preserved an almost unbroken silence. When at length he published his *Poems, in Two Volumes*, in 1842, he was recognized immediately as the poet, not of a coterie, but of England. The majestic blank-verse of *Morte d'Arthur*, the passionate force of *Locksley Hall*, the sweet English beauty of *Dora*, *The Garden-*

er's *Daughter*, and *The Talking Oak*, the metaphysical depth and human intensity of *The Two Voices* and *The Vision of Sin*,— and perhaps more than all the simple, magical pathos of that undying song,

Break, break, break
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !

won the admiration of readers of every class, and Tennyson was acknowledged, in the language of Wordsworth, as decidedly the first of our living poets. But no less significant than these new poems, in the history of his genius, was the form in which his earlier poems were reprinted. The edition of 1842 contained a selection from the edition of 1833; and it is most remarkable that all of the weaker pieces which Lockhart had criticised most severely were omitted, while those which were retained had been so carefully pruned and corrected as to seem almost rewritten. There is an immense importance, for example, in such a slight change as the omission of the accent from words like *charmèd* and *apparellèd*. It indicates a desire to avoid even the appearance of affectation. Or take this passage from *The Miller's Daughter* in its first form :—

Remember you that pleasant day
When after roving in the woods,
('Twas April then), I came and lay
Beneath the gummy chestnut-buds
That glistened in the April blue.
Upon the slope so smooth and cool
I lay and never thought of *you*
But angled in the deep mill-pool.

A water-rat from off the bank
Plunged in the stream. With idle care
Downlooking through the sedges rank
I saw your troubled image there.
Upon the dark and dimpled beck
It wandered like a floating light,
A full fair form, a warm white neek
And two white arms — how rosy white !

These are very pretty lines, and doubtless quite true to nature, for the buds of the chestnut are very sticky in April, and the water-rat has a habit of diving suddenly into the water. But as Mr. Lockhart politely observed, the accumulation of such tender images as the gummy buds and the plunging rat was somewhat unusual and disturbing. Tennyson saw the justice of the criticism. He recognized that the canon of truth to nature must be supplemented by the canon of symmetry in art, and that facts which are incongruous and out of harmony must not be recorded. The water-rat was

not profoundly suggestive of love at first sight. Moreover, one who was looking up at the chestnut-buds would not have noticed their stickiness, but only their shining as they were moved by the wind. Here, then, is the new version of the passage, quite as true but far more poetical, and made simpler by a more careful art: —

But, Alice, what an hour was that,
When after roving in the woods
('Twas April then), I came and sat
Below the chestnuts, when their buds
Were glistening to the breezy blue;
And on the slope, an absent fool
I cast me down, nor thought of you,
But angled in the higher pool.

Then leapt a trout. In lazy mood
I watch'd the little circles die;
They past into the level flood,
And there a vision caught my eye;
The reflex of a beauteous form,
A glowing arm, a gleaming neck,
As when a sunbeam wavers warm
Within the dark and dimpled beek.

Now a poet who could take criticism in this fashion and use it to such good purpose, was certainly neither weak nor wayward. Weighed in the balance, he was not found wanting but steadily growing. He would not abandon his art at the voice of censure,

but correct and perfect it, until it stood complete and sound beyond the reach of censure. The method and the result of this process of self-criticism — which Tennyson has practiced more patiently and successfully than any other poet — may be traced most clearly in the history of *The Palace of Art*, the longest and most important of the 1833 poems. Nor can I think of any better way to study the unfolding of his genius and the development of his style, than to observe carefully the number and nature and purpose of the changes which he has made in this poem.

The poem is an allegory. Its meaning is clearly defined in the dedication to an unnamed friend. Its object is to exhibit a gifted but selfish soul, in its endeavours to live alone in its own enchanted world of refined and consummate pleasures, without caring for the interests or the sufferings of the great world of mankind. The lesson which the poet desires to teach is that such a life must be a failure and carry its punishment within itself. It is an æsthetic protest against æstheticism. But it is worthy of notice that, while the dedication in the first edition was addressed to a member of the æsthetic class, —

You are an artist, and will understand
Its many lesser meanings,—

in the second edition these lines have disappeared. It is as if the poet desired to give a wider range to his lesson ; as if he would say, “ You are a man, and no matter what your occupation may be, you will feel the truth of this allegory.”

This first alteration is characteristic. It shows us the transformation of Tennyson’s feelings and purposes during those eventful ten years of silence. He had grown broader and deeper. He was no longer content to write for a small and select circle of readers. His sympathies were larger and more humane. He began to feel that he had a country, and patriotism inspired him to write for England. He began to feel that the lives of common men and women were full of materials for poetry, and philanthropy inspired him to speak as a man to his fellow-men. This change was prophesied in the first conception of *The Palace of Art*, but when the fulfilment came, it was so thorough that it had power to remould the form of the prophecy itself.

The Palace which the poet built for his soul is described as standing on a lofty table-

land, secure and inaccessible, for his first object was to dwell apart from the world. Then follows, in the original edition, a description of its long-sounding corridors,

Roofed with thick plates of green and orange glass,
Ending in stately rooms.

In the second edition the architect's good taste has discarded this conservatory effect and these curiously assorted colors. He describes instead the surroundings of the Palace, with its four great courts and its foaming fountains, its smooth lawns and branching cloisters. He draws a gilded parapet around the roof, and shows the distant landscape. In following this order he has given reality and dignity to his structure, so that it seems less like a picture-gallery and more like a royal mansion.

Then he leads the soul through the different rooms, and describes the tapestries on the walls. As the poem stood at first these included the Madonna, Venus Anadyomene, St. Cecily, Arthur in the valley of Avilion, Kriemhilt pouring the Nibelungen gold into the Rhine, Europa, with her hand grasping the golden horn of the bull, and Ganymede borne upward by the eagle, together with landscapes of forest and pasture, sea-coast,

mountain-glen, and woodland, interspersed with gardens and vineyards. When the Palace was changed, Venus and Kriemhilt disappeared, and Europa occupied a smaller place. Pictures of Numa and his wise wood-nymphs, Indian Cama seated on his summer throne, and the porch of Mohammed's Paradise thronged with houris, were added. And among the landscapes there were two new scenes, one of cattle feeding by a river, and another of reapers at their sultry toil.

The soul pauses here, in the first edition, and indulges in a little rhapsody on the evolution of the intellect. This disappears in the second edition, and we pass directly from the ehambers hung with arras into the great hall, the central apartment of the Palace. Here the architect had gathered, at first, a collection of portraits of great men which was so catholic in its taste as to be almost motley. Lockhart laughed derisively when he saw the group. “Milton, Shakespeare, Dante, Homer, Michael Angelo, Martin Luther, Francis Bacon, Cervantes, Calderon, King David, the Halicarnasseean (*quære*, which of them?), Alfred himself (presumably not the poet),

Isaiah with fierce Ezekiel,
Swarth Moses by the Coptic sea,
Plato, Petrarcha, Livy, Raphaël,
And eastern Confutzee."

This reminds the critic of a verse in that Hibernian poem, *The Groves of Blarney*, and he wonders whether Mr. Tennyson was not thinking of the Blarney collection —

"Statues growing that noble place in
Of heathen goddesses most rare;
Homer, Plutarch, and Nebuchadnezzar,
All standing naked in the open air."

But in the revised Palace all these have been left out, except the first four, and the architect has added a great

mosaic choicely plann'd
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every land
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and stings;
Here play'd a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose an athlete, strong to break or bind
All force in bonds that might endure,
And here once more like some sick man declin'd
And trusted any cure.

This mosaic covered the floor, and over these symbols of struggling humanity the vainglorious soul trod proudly as she went up to

take her throne between the shining windows on which the faces of Plato and Verulam were blazoned. In the first edition there was a gorgeous description of the banquet with which she regaled herself; piles of flavorful fruits, musk-scented blooms, ambrosial pulps and juices, graceful chalices of curious wine, and a service of costly jars and bossed salvers. Thus she feasted in solitary state, and

ere young night divine
Crowned dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils,
She lit white streams of dazzling gas,
And soft and fragrant flames of precious oils
In moons of purple glass.

This was written when the use of gas for illuminating purposes was new, and not considered unromantic. When the Palace was remodelled the gas was turned off, and the supper was omitted. The soul was lifted above mere sensual pleasures, and sat listening to her own song and rejoicing in her royal seclusion.

There are a great many minor alterations scattered through the poem, which I have not time to notice. Some of them are mere changes of spelling, like Avilion, which be-

comes Avalon; and Cecily, which is changed to Cicely in 1842, and back again to Cecily in later editions; and sweet Europa's mantle, which at first "blew unclasped," and then lost its motion and got a touch of colour, becoming "blue, unclasped," and finally returned to its original form. (Some one has said that a painter would not have been forced to choose between colour and motion, for he could have made the mantle at once blue and blowing.) Corrections and re-corrections such as these show how carefully Mr. Tennyson seeks the perfection of language.

But the most interesting change yet to be noted is directly due to Lockhart's sharp criticism; at least, it was he who first pointed out the propriety of it, in his usual sarcastic way. "In this poem," said he, "we first observed a stroke of art which we think very ingenious. No one who has ever written verses but must have felt the pain of erasing some happy line, some striking phrase, which, however excellent in itself, did not exactly suit the place for which it was destined. How curiously does an author mould and remould the plastic verse in order to fit in the favorite thought; and when he finds

that he cannot introduce it, as Corporal Trim says, *any how*, with what reluctance does he at last reject the intractable, but still cherished, offspring of his brain. Mr. Tennyson manages this delicate matter in a new and better way. He says, with great candour and simplicity, 'If this poem were not already too long *I should have added the following stanzas*,' and then *he adds them* ; or, 'I intended to have added something on statuary, but I found it very difficult; but I have finished the statues of Elijah and Olympias; judge whether I have succeeded; ' and then *we have those two statues*. This is certainly the most ingenious device that has ever come under our observation for reconciling the rigour of criticism with the indulgence of parental partiality."

The passages to which Mr. Lockhart alludes in this delicious paragraph are the notes appended to pages 73 and 83 of the original edition. The former of these contains four stanzas on sculptures; the latter gives a description of one of the favourite occupations of the self-indulgent soul, which is too fine to be left unquoted. Above the Palace a massive tower was built:

Hither, when all the deep unsounded skies
Were shuddering with silent stars, she clomb,
And, as with optic glasses, her keen eyes
Pierced thro' the mystic dome,

Regions of lucid matter taking forms,
Brushes of fire, hazy gleams,
Clusters and beds of worlds, and bee-like swarms
Of suns, and starry streams.

She saw the snowy poles of moonless Mars,
That marvellous round of milky light
Below Orion, and those double stars
Whereof the one more bright

Is circled by the other.

But, however admirable these lines may seem, and however much we may regret their loss, there can be no doubt that the manner of their introduction was incongruous and absurd. It was like saying, “This Palace is not to have a hall of statues, but I will simply put on a small wing as a sample of what is not to be done. And there is no room for an observatory, but I will construct one in order that you may see what it would have been like.” The poet himself seems to have recognized that the device was too “ingenious” to be dignified; and in 1842 he restored the symmetry of the Palace by omitting the annex-buildings entirely.

And now let us sum up the changes which have been made in the Palace since it was first constructed. For this purpose it will be better to take Macmillan's edition of 1884 (which probably represents the final text) and lay it beside the edition of 1833.

In 1833 the poem, including the notes, contained eighty-three stanzas; in 1884 it has only seventy-five. Of the original number thirty-one have been entirely omitted — in other words, more than a third of the structure has been pulled down; and, in place of these, twenty-two new stanzas have been added, making a change of fifty-three stanzas. The fifty-two that remain have almost all been retouched and altered, so that very few stand to-day in the same shape which they had at the beginning. I suppose there is no other poem in the language, not even among the writings of Tennyson, which has been worked over so carefully as this.

But what is the significance of all this toilsome correction and remodelling? How does the study of it help us to a better comprehension of the poet? I think it shows us, first of all, the difference between the intellectual temper of Tennyson and that of a man who is possessed by his theories, instead

of possessing them, and whom they carry away into eccentricity. Suppose, for example, that such an article as Lockhart's had been written about Wordsworth's early work, what would he have done? Or rather, for the case is not adscititious but actual, what did he do when the Philistines fell upon him? He replied to the attacks upon *Goody Blake* by publishing *Peter Bell*; he insisted upon using the language of common life even when he had nothing to say; he justified his poem upon an idiot and his pony, by producing a much longer one upon a pedlar and his ass. But with Tennyson the effect of criticism was different. He had the saving sense of humour, and could see the point of a clever jest even when it was directed against himself. He was willing to learn even from an enemy, and he counted no pains too great to take if only he could succeed in cleansing his work from blemishes and freeing it from "the defects of its virtues." The result of this, merely from a technical point of view, is seen in the *Palace of Art*. It has gained in rebuilding. The omission of unnecessary decoration is a good rule for the architect. And though we lose many rich and polished

details, beautiful as the capitals of Corinthian pillars, their absence leaves the Palace standing more clear and noble before the inward eye.

But when we look at the alterations from a higher point, when we consider their effect upon the meaning of the poem, we see how immense has been the gain. The new lines and stanzas are framed, almost without exception, with a wondrous skill to intensify the allegory. Touch after touch brings out the picture of the self-centred soul: the indifference that hardens into cruel contempt, the pride that verges on insanity, the insatiate lust of pleasure that devours all the world can give and then turns to feed upon itself, the empty darkness of the life without love. It seems as if the poet had felt more deeply, as he grew older, the need of making this picture clear and strong. Take for instance these two stanzas which he has added to the poem, describing the exultation of the soul in her exclusive joy:—

O God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.

In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep.

These lines are essential to the understanding of the poem. They touch the very core of the sin which defiled the Palace and destroyed the soul's happiness. It was not merely that she loved beauty and music and fragrance ; but that in her love for these she lost her moral sense, denied her human duties, and scorned, instead of pitying and helping, her brother-men who lived on the plain below. This is the sin of selfish pride, the sin which drives out the Christ because He eats with publicans and sinners, the unpardonable sin which makes its own hell. And it is just this sin, the poet declares, that transforms the Palaeae of Art into a prison of despair.

Is not this a lesson of which the age has need ? The chosen few are saying to their disciples that the world is a failure, humanity a mass of wretchedness, religion an outworn dream,— the only refuge for the elect of wealth and culture is in art. Retreat into your gardens of pleasure. Let the plague take the city. Delight your eyes with all

things fair and sweet. So shall it be well with you and your soul shall dwell at ease while the swine perish. It is the new gospel of pessimism which despairs of the common people because it despises them, — nay, the old gospel of pessimism which seeks to secrete a selfish happiness in “the worst of all possible worlds.” Nebuchadnezzar tried it in Babylon; Hadrian tried it in Rome; Solomon tried it in Jerusalem; and from all its palaces comes the same voice: *vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.*

It is not until the soul has learned a better wisdom, learned that the human race is one, and that none can really rise by treading on his brother-men, learned that true art is not the slave of luxury but the servant of humanity, learned that happiness is born, not of the lust to possess and enjoy, but of the desire to give and to bless, — then, and not until then, when she brings others with her, can the soul find true rest in her Palace.

Tennyson has learned, as well as taught, this consecration of art. He has always been an artist, but not for art's sake; a lover of beauty, but also a lover of humanity; a singer whose music has brightened and blessed thousands of homes wherever the

English tongue is spoken, and led the feet
of young men and maidens, by some Or-
phean enchantment, into royal mansions and
gardens, full of all things pure and lovely
and of good report.

MILTON AND TENNYSON.

3

MILTON AND TENNYSON.

COMPARISON has long been recognized as one of the fruitful methods of criticism. But in using this method one needs to remember that it is the least obvious comparison which is often the truest and the most suggestive. The relationship of poets does not lie upon the surface ; they receive their spiritual inheritance from beyond the lines of direct descent. Thus a poet may be most closely connected with one whose name we never join with his, and we may find his deepest resemblance to a man not only of another age, but of another school.

Tennyson has been compared most frequently with Keats ; sometimes, but falsely, with Shelley ; and sometimes, more wisely, with Wordsworth. Our accomplished American critic, Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, who touches nothing that he does not adorn, has a chapter in his *Victorian Poets* on Tennyson and Theocritus. But the best comparison,— one which runs far below the out-

ward appearance into the profound affinities of genius — yet remains to be carefully traced. Among all poets, — certainly among all English poets, — it seems to me that Tennyson's next of kin is Milton.

By this I do not mean to say that they are equally great or exactly alike. For so far as perfect likeness is concerned, there is no such thing among the sons of men. Every just comparison involves a contrast. And when we speak of greatness, Milton's place as the second poet of England is not now to be called in question by any rival claim. Yet even here, when we ask who is to take the third place, I think there is no one who has such a large and substantial title as the author of *In Memoriam* and *The Idylls of the King*. The conjunction of the names of Milton and Tennyson will be no unfamiliar event for the future ; and for the present there is no better way of studying these two great poets than to lay their works side by side, and trace their lives through the hidden parallel of a kindred destiny.

I.

There are two direct references to Milton in the works of Tennyson ; and these we

must examine first of all, in order that we may understand the attitude of his mind towards the elder master. The first is in *The Palace of Art*. The royal daïs on which the soul set up her intelleetual throne is deseribed as having above it four portraits of wise men.

There deephaired Milton like an angel tall
Stood limned, Shakespeare bland and mild,
Grim Dante pressed his lips, and from the wall
The bald blind Homer smiled.

Thus ran the verse in the 1833 edition ; and it tells us the rank which Tennyson, in his twenty-fourth year, assigned to Milton. But there is hardly an instance in which the fineness of Tennyson's self - correction is more happily illustrated than in the change which he has made in this passage. In the later editions it reads as follows : —

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him, Shakespeare bland and mild ;
And there the world-worn Dante grasped his song
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest ;
A million wrinkles carved his skin ;
A hundred winters snowed upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

Let those who think that poetic expression

is a matter of chance ponder upon this passage. Every alteration is an improvement ; and most of all the change in the first line. For now the poet has formed a true picture of Milton's genius, and shows a profound comprehension of its essential quality. Its sign is strength, but strength seraphic ; not the rude, volcanic force of the Titan, but a power serene, harmonious, beautiful ; a power of sustained flight, of far-reaching vision, of lofty eloquence, such as belongs to the seraphim alone. Mark you, the word is not "angel," for the angels are lower beings, followers in the heavenly host, some weak, and some fallen ; nor is the word "cherub," for the cherubim, in the ancient Hebrew doctrine, are silent and mysterious creatures, not shaped like men, voiceless and inapproachable ; but the word is "seraph," for the seraphim hover on mighty wings about the throne of God, chanting His praise one to another, and bearing His messages from heaven to earth. This, then, is the figure which Tennyson chooses, with the precision of a great poet, to summon the spirit of Milton before us, — *a seraph strong*. That one phrase is worth more than all of Dr. Johnson's ponderous criticisms.

The second reference is found among the *Experiments in Quantity* which were printed in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1863.

We have here the expression of Tennyson's mature opinion, carefully considered, and uttered with the strength of a generous and clear conviction; an utterance well worth weighing, not only for the perfection of its form, but also for the richness of its contents and the revelation which it makes of the poet's own nature. Hear with what power and stateliness the tone-picture begins, rising at once to the height of the noble theme; —

O, mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O, skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
 God-gifted organ-voice of England,
 Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
 Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,
 Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
 Rings to the roar of an angel onset, —
Me rather all that bowery loneliness
 The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring
 And bloom profuse and cedar arches
 Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
 Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
 And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
 Whisper in odorous heights of even.

Thus the brief ode finds its perfect close,

the rich, full tones dying away in the prolonged period, as the strains of some large music are lost in the hush of twilight. But one other hand could have swept these grand chords and evoked these tones of majestic sweetness, — the hand of Milton himself.

It was De Quincey, that most nearly inspired, but most nearly insane, of critics, who first spoke of the Miltonic movement as having the qualities of an organ voluntary. But the comparison which with him was little more than a fortunate and striking simile is transformed by the poet into a perfect metaphor.

The great organ, pouring forth its melodious thunders, becomes a living thing, divinely dowered and filled with music, — an instrument no longer, but a *voice*, majestic, potent, thrilling the heart, — the voice of England pealing in the ears of all the world and all time. Swept on the flood of those great harmonies, the mighty hosts of angels clash together in heaven-shaking conflict. But it is the same full tide of music which flows down in sweetest, lingering cadence to wander through the cool groves and fragrant valleys of Paradise. Here the younger poet will more gladly dwell, finding a deeper

delight in these solemn and tranquil melodies than in the roar and clang of battles, even though angelic.

Is it not true? True, not only that the organ voice has the twofold gift of beauty and grandeur; true, not only that Tennyson has more sympathy with the loveliness of Eden than with the mingled splendours and horrors of the celestial battlefields; but true, also, that there is a more potent and lasting charm in Milton's description of the beautiful than in his description of the sublime. I do not think that *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Comus* have any lower place in the world, or any less enduring life, than *Paradise Lost*. And even in that great epic there are no passages more worthy to be remembered, more fruitful of pure feelings and lofty thoughts, than those like the Hymn of Adam, or the description of the first evening in Eden, which show us the fairness and delightfulness of God's world. We have forgotten this; we have thought so much of Milton's strength and sublimity that we have ceased to recognize what is also true, that he, of all English poets, is by nature the supreme lover of beauty.

II.

This, then, is the first point of vital sympathy between Tennyson and Milton: their common love of the beautiful, not only in nature, but also in art. And this we see most clearly in the youth and in the youthful writings of the two poets.

There is a close resemblance in their early life. Both were born and reared in homes of modest comfort and refined leisure, under the blended influences of culture and religion. Milton's father was a scrivener; deprived of his heritage because he obeyed his conscience to become a Protestant, but amassing a competence by his professional labor, he ordered his house well, softening and beautifying the solemnity of Puritan ways with the pursuit of music and literature. Tennyson was born in a country rectory, one of those fair homes of peace and settled order which are the pride and strength of England,—homes where “plain living and high thinking” produce the noblest types of manhood. His father also, like Milton's, was a musician, and surrounded his seven sons with influences which gave them poetic tastes and impulses. It is

strange to see how large a part music has played in the development of these two poets. Milton, even in his poverty, would have an organ in his house to solace his dark hours. Tennyson, it is said, often called one of his sisters to play to him while he composed ; and in his dedication of the *Songs of the Wrens* to Sir Ivor Guest, he speaks of himself as “ wedded to music.”

It is of course no more than a coincidence that both of the young poets should have been students at Trinity College, Cambridge. But there is something deeper in the similarity of their college lives and studies. A certain loftiness of spirit, an habitual abstraction of thought, separated them from the mass of their fellow-students. They were absorbed in communion with the great minds of Greece and Rome. They drank deep at the springs of ancient poesy. Not alone the form, but the spirit, of the classics became familiar to them. They were enamoured of the beauty of the old-world legends, the bright mythologies of Hellas, and Latinm’s wondrous histories of gods and men. For neither of them was this love of the ancient poets a transient delight, a passing mood. It took strong hold upon them ; it became

a moulding power in their life and work. We can trace it in all their writings. Allusions, thenies, illustrations, similes, forms of verse, echoes of thought, conscious or unconscious imitations,—a thousand tokens remind us that we are still beneath the influence of the old masters of a vanished world,—

“*The dead, but sceptered sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.*”

And here, again, we see a deep bond of sympathy between Tennyson and Milton: they are certainly the most learned, the most classical, of England’s poets.

Following their lives beyond the university, we find that both of them came out into a period of study, of seclusion, of leisure, of poetical productiveness. Milton retired to his father’s house at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where he lived for five years. Tennyson’s home at Somersby, in Lincolnshire, was broken up by his father’s death in 1831; and after that, as Carlyle wrote to Emerson, “he preferred clubbing with his Mother and some Sisters, to live un-promoted and write Poems; . . . now here, now there; the family always within reach of London, never in it; he himself making rare

and brief visits, lodging in some old comrade's rooms." The position and circumstances of the two young poets were wonderfully alike. Both were withdrawn from the whirl and conflict of active life into a world of lovely forms, sweet sounds, and enchanting dreams; both fed their minds with the beauty of nature and of ancient story, charmed by the music of divine philosophy, and by songs of birds filling the sweet English air at dawn or twilight; both loved to roam at will over hill and dale and by the wandering streams; to watch the bee, with honeyed thigh, singing from flower to flower, and catch the scent of violets hidden in the green; to hear the sound of far-off bells swinging over the wide-watered shore, and listen to the sighing of the wind among the trees, or the murmur of the waves on the river-bank; to pore and dream through long night-watches over the legends of the past, until the cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn, and the lark's song startled the dull night from her watch-tower in the skies. They dwelt as idlers in the land, but it was a glorious and fruitful idleness, for they were reaping

The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

How few and brief, and yet how wonderful, how precious, are the results of these peaceful years. *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, *Lycidas*; *Isabel*, *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, *Ode to Memory*, *The Dying Swan*, *The Palace of Art*, *A Dream of Fair Women*, *Mariana*, *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *Œnone*, — these are poems to be remembered, read, and re-read with ever fresh delight, the most perfect things of their kind in all literature. Grander poems, more passionate, more powerful, are many; but there are none in which the pure love of beauty, Greek in its healthy symmetry, Christian in its reverent earnestness, has produced work so complete and exquisite as the early poems of Milton and Tennyson.

Their best qualities are the same. I am more impressed with this the more I read them. They are marked by the same exact observation of Nature, the same sensitive perception of her most speaking aspects, the same charm of simple and musical description. Read the *Ode to Memory*, — for instance, the description of the poet's home: —

Come from the woods that belt the gray hillside,
The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door;

And chiefly from the brook that loves
 To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand
 Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
 Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,
 In every elbow and turn,
 The filtered tribute of the rough woodland.

O! hither lead my feet!
 Pour round my ears the livelong bleat
 Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled folds
 Upon the ridged wolds,
 When the first matin-song hath waken'd loud,
 Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,
 What time the amber morn
 Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung cloud.

Compare with this some lines from *L'Allegro* : —

To hear the lark begin his flight,
 And singing startle the dull night
 From his watch-tower in the skies,
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise !

Some time walking, not unseen,
 By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
 Right against the eastern gate
 Where the great sun begins his state,
 Rob'd in flames and amber light,
 The clouds in thousand liveries dight ;
 While the ploughman, near at hand,
 Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
 And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
 And the mower whets his scythe,
 And every shepherd tells his tale
 Under the hawthorn in the dale.
 Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
 While the landscape round it measures ;

Russet lawns and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest ;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide.

Here are the same breadth of vision, delicacy of touch, atmospheric effect ; the same sensitiveness to the simplest variations of light and sound ; the same power to shed over the quiet scenery of the English country the light of an ideal beauty. It is an art far beyond that of the landscape painter, and all the more perfect because so well concealed.

Another example will show us the similarity of the two poets in their more purely imaginative work, the description of that which they have seen only with the dreaming eyes of fancy. Take the closing song, or epilogue of the Attendant Spirit, in *Comus* : —

To the ocean now I fly
And those happy climes that lie
Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three,
That sing about the golden tree :
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring ;

The graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
Thither all their bounties bring ;
There eternal summer dwells,
And west-winds, with musky wing,
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
Beds of hyacinths and roses.

Compare this with Tennyson's *Recollections of the Arabian Nights* : —

Thence thro' the garden I was drawn —
A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
And many a shadow-chequer'd lawn
Full of the city's stilly sound,
And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round
The stately cedar, tamarisks,
Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
Graven with emblems of the time,
In honour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

With dazed vision unawares
From the long alley's latticed shade
Emerged, I came upon the great
Pavilion of the Caliphat.
Right to the carven cedarn doors
Flung inward over spangled floors,
Broad-based flights of marble stairs
Ran up with golden balustrade,

After the fashion of the time,
And humour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Here is more than a mere resemblance of words and themes, more than an admiring imitation or echoing of phrases ; it is an identity of taste, spirit, temperament. But the resemblance of forms is also here. We can trace it even in such a minor trait as the skilful construction and use of double-words. This has often been noticed as a distinguishing feature of Tennyson's poetry. But Milton uses them almost as freely and quite as magically. In *Comus*, which has a few more than a thousand lines, there are fifty-four double epithets ; in *L'Allegro* there are sixteen to a hundred and fifty lines ; in *Il Penseroso* there are eleven to one hundred and seventy lines. Tennyson's *Ode to Memory*, with a hundred and twenty lines, has fifteen double-words ; *Mariana*, with eighty lines, has nine ; the *Lotos-Eaters*, with two hundred lines, has thirty-two. And if I should choose at random fifty such words from the early poems, I do not think that any one, not knowing them by heart, could tell at first glance which were Milton's and which Tennyson's. Let us try the experiment with the following list : —

Low-thoughted, empty-vaulted, rosy-white, rosy-bosomed, violet-embroidered, dew-impearled, over-exquisite, long-levelled, mild-eyed, white-handed, white-breasted, pure-eyed, sin-worn, self-consumed, self-profit, close-curtained, low-browed, ivy-crowued, gray-eyed, far-beaming, pale-eyed, down-steering, flower-inwoven, dewy-dark, moon-loved, smooth-swarded, quick-falling, slow-dropping, coral-paven, lily-cradled, amber-dropping, thrice-great, dewy-feathered, purple-spiked, foam-fountains, sand-built, night-steeds, full-flowing, sable-stoled, sun-steeped, star-led, pilot-stars, full-juiced, dew-fed, brazen-headed, wisdom-bred, star-strown, low-embowed, iron-worded, globe-filled.

It will puzzle the reader to distinguish with any degree of certainty the authorship of these words. And this seems the more remarkable when we remember that there are two centuries of linguistic development and changing fashions of poetic speech between *Comus* and *Ænone*.

Not less remarkable is the identity of spirit in Tennyson and Milton in their delicate yet wholesome sympathy with Nature, their perception of the relation of her moods and aspects to the human heart. This, in fact, is the keynote of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. The same world, seen under different lights and filled with different sounds, responds as deeply to the joyous, as to the melancholy, spirit. There is a pro-

found meaning, a potent influence, in the outward shows of sky and earth. While the Lady of Shalott dwells in her pure seclusion, the sun shines, the lily blossoms on the river's breast, and the blue sky is unclouded ; but when she passes the fatal line, and the curse has fallen on her, then

In the stormy eastwind straining,
The pale yellow woods are waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining,
Over tower'd Camelot.

Thus, also, when the guilty pair in Eden had transgressed that sole command on which their happiness depended, —

Sky lowered, and muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completing of the mortal sin.

Mr. Ruskin says that this is “the pathetic fallacy ;” for, as a matter of fact, the clouds do not weep, nor do the rivers complain, and he maintains that to speak of them as if they did these things is to speak with a certain degree of falsehood which is unworthy of the highest kind of art. But Mr. Ruskin may say what he pleases about Milton and Tennyson without much likelihood of persuading any sane person that their poetry is not profoundly true to Nature, —

and most true precisely in its recognition of her power to echo and reflect the feelings of man. All her realities are but seemings ; and she does seem to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that do rejoice. Nothing can be more real than that. The chemistry of the sun is no more true than its message of joy ; the specific gravity of the rain is of no greater consequence than its message of sadness. And for the poet the first necessity is that he should be able to feel and interpret the sentiment of natural objects. The art of landscape-poetry, I take it, consists in this : the choice and description of such actual images of external nature as are capable of being grouped and coloured by a dominant idea or feeling. Of this art the most perfect masters are Tennyson and Milton. And here I have reversed the order of the names, because I reckon that on this point Tennyson stands first. Take, for example, the little poem on *Mariana*, — that wonderful variation on the theme of loneliness suggested by a single line in *Measure for Measure*. Here the thought is the weariness of waiting for one who does not come. The garden has grown black with moss, the nails in the wall are

rusted, the thatch is full of weeds on the forsaken house ; the moat is crusted over with creeping marsh-plants, the solitary poplar on the fen trembles eternally in the wind ; slowly pass the night-hours, marked by the distant sounds of crowing cocks and lowing oxen ; slower still the hours of day, while the fly buzzes on the window-pane, the mouse shrieks in the wainscot, the sparrow chirps on the roof ; everything in the picture belongs to a life sunken in monotony, lost in monotony, forgotten as a dead man out of mind. Even the light that falls into the moated grange is full of dust.

But most she loathed the hour
 When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
 Athwart the chambers, and the day
 Downsleped, was westering in his bower.
 Then, said she, “ I am very dreary,
 He will not come,” she said ;
 She wept, “ I am aweary, aweary,
 Oh God, that I were dead.”

Now all this is perfect painting of the things in nature which respond exactly to the sense of depression and solitude and intolerable, prolonged neglect, in a human soul. For an illustration of the opposite feeling turn to the description of the May morning in *The Gardener's Daughter*. The

passage is too long to quote here ; but it is beyond doubt one of the most rich and joyous pictures in English verse. The world seems to be overflowing with blossom and song as the youth draws near to the maiden. It is love set to landscape. And yet there is not a single false touch ; all is true and clear and precise, down to the lark's song which grows more rapid as he sinks towards his nest, and the passing cloud whose moisture draws out the sweet smell of the flowers.

Another trait common to the earlier poems of Milton and Tennyson is their purity of tone. They are sensuous, — indeed Milton declared that all good poetry must be sensuous, — but never for a moment, in a single line, are they sensual.

Look at the Lady in *Comus*. She is the sweet embodiment of Milton's youthful ideal of virtue, clothed with the fairness of opening womanhood, armed with the sun-clad power of chastity. Darkness and danger cannot

Stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts.

Evil things have no power upon her, but shrink abashed from her presence.

So dear to heaven is saintly chastity
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt ;
And in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal.

And now, beside this loveliest Lady, bring
Isabel, with those

Eyes not down-dropt nor over-bright, but fed
With the clear-pointed flame of chastity,
Clear, without heat, undying, tended by
Pure vestal thoughts in the translucent fane
Of her still spirit.

Bring also her who, for her people's good,
passed naked on her palfrey through the
city streets, — Godiva, who

Rode forth, clothed on with chastity ;
The deep air listen'd round her as she rode,
And all the low wind hardly breathed for fear.

These are sisters, perfect in purity as in
beauty, and worthy to be enshrined forever
in the love of youth. They are ideals which
draw the heart, not downward, but upward
by the power of “ *das ewig Weibliche.* ”

There are many other points of resemblance
between the early poems of Milton

and Tennyson on which it would be pleasant to dwell. Echoes of thought like that sonnet, beginning

Check every outflash, every ruder sally
Of thought and speech: speak low, and give up wholly
Thy spirit to mild-minded melancholy,—

which seems almost as if it might have been written by *Il Pensero*. Coincidences of taste and reading such as the fondness for the poet to whom Milton alludes as

Him that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball and of Algarsife
And who had Canace to wife,—

and whom Tennyson calls

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

Likenesses of manner such as the imitation of the smooth elegiac poets in *Lycidas* and *Œnone*. But a critic who wishes his conclusions to be accepted cheerfully and with a sense of gratitude must leave his readers to supply some illustrations for themselves. And this I will be prudent enough to do; expressing only the opinion that those who study the subject carefully will find that there is no closer parallel in literature than

that between the early poems of Milton and Tennyson.

III.

There are two causes which have power to change the natural or premeditated course of a man's life, — the shock of a great outward catastrophe, and the shock of a profound inward grief. When the former comes, it shatters all his cherished plans, renders the execution of his favorite projects impossible, directs the current of his energy into new channels, plunges him into conflict with circumstances, turns his strength against corporeal foes, and produces a change of manner, speech, life, which is at once evident and tangible. With the latter, it is different. The inward shock brings with it no alteration of the visible environment, leaves the man where he stood before, to the outward eye unchanged, free to tread the same paths and pursue the same designs; and yet, in truth, not free; most deeply, though most subtly, changed; for the soul, shaken from her serene repose, and losing the self-confidence of youth, either rises into a higher life or sinks into a lower; meeting the tremendous questions which haunt the shade of a supreme

personal bereavement, she finds an answer either in the eternal Yes or in the eternal No ; and though form and accent and mode of speech remain the same, the thoughts and intents of the heart are altered forever.

To Milton came the outward conflict ; to Tennyson, the inward grief. And as we follow them beyond the charmed circle of their early years, we must trace the parallel between them, if indeed we can find it at all, far below the surface ; although even yet we shall see some external resemblances amid many and strong contrasts.

Milton's catastrophe was the civil war, sweeping over England like a flood. But the fate which involved him in it was none other than his own conscience. This it was that drew him, by compulsion more strong than sweet, from the florid literary hospitality of Italian mutual laudation societies into the vortex of tumultuous London, made him "lay aside his singing robes" for the heavy armour of the controversialist, and leave his "calm and pleasant solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark on a troubled sea of noises and harsh disputes." His conscience, I say, not his tastes : all these led him the other way.

But an irresistible sense of duty caught him, and dragged him, as it were, by the neck to the verge of the precipice, and flung him down into the thick of the hottest conflict that England has ever seen.

Once there, he does not retreat. He quits himself like a man. He is not a Puritan. He loves many things that the mad Puritans hate, — art, music, fine literature, nature, beauty. But one thing he loves more than all, — liberty! For that he will fight, — fight on the Puritan side, fight against anybody, desperately, pertinaciously, with grand unconsciousness of possible defeat. He catches the lust of combat, and “drinks delight of battle with his peers.” The serene poet is transformed into a thundering pamphleteer. He launches deadly bolts against tyranny in Church, in State, in society. He strikes at the corrupt clergy, at the false, cruel king, at the self-seeking bigots disguised as friends of freedom. He is absorbed in strife. Verse is forgotten. But one brief strain of true poetry bursts from him at the touch of personal grief. The rest is all buried, choked down, concealed. The full stream of his energy, unstinted, undivided, flows into the struggle

for freedom and truth ; and even when the war is ended, the good cause betrayed by secret enemies and foolish friends, the freedom of England sold back into the hands of the treacherous Stuarts, Milton fights on, like some guerilla captain in a far mountain region, who has not heard, or will not believe, the news of surrender.

The blow which fell on Tennyson was secret. The death of Arthur Henry Hallam, in 1833, caused no great convulsion in English politics, brought no visible disaster to church or state, sent only the lightest and most transient ripple of sorrow across the surface of society ; but to the heart of one man it was the shock of an inward earthquake, upheaving the foundations of life and making the very arch of heaven tremble. Bound to Hallam by one of those rare friendships passing the love of women, Tennyson felt his loss in the inmost fibres of his being. The world was changed, darkened, filled with secret conflicts. The importunate questions of human life and destiny thronged upon his soul. The ideal peace, the sweet, art-satisfied seclusion, the dreams of undisturbed repose, became impossible for him. He must fight, not for a

party cause, but for spiritual freedom and immortal hopes, not against inecorporate and embattled enemies, but against unseen foes, — thrones, prinicipalities, and powers of darkness.

I think we have some record of this strife in poems like *Two Voices*, and *The Vision of Sin*. The themes here treated are the deepest and most awful that can engage the mind. The worth of life, the significance of suffering, the reality of virtue, the existence of truth, the origin and end of evil, human responsibility, Divine goodness, mysteries of the now and the hereafter, — these are the problems with which the poet is forced to deal, and he dares to deal with them face to face. I will not say that he finds, as yet, the true solution ; there is a more profound and successful treatment of the same problems to follow in *In Memoriam*. But I think that, so far as they go, these poems are right and true ; and in them, enlightened by grief, strengthened by inward combat, the poet has struck a loftier note than can be heard in the beautiful poems of his youth.

For this, mark you, is clear. The poet has now become a man. The discipline of sorrow has availed. Life is real and earnest

to him. He grapples with the everlasting facts of humanity. Men and women are closer to him. He can write poems like *Dora*, *Ulysses*, *St. Simeon Stylites*, as wonderful for their difference in tone and subject as for their common virility and absolute truth to nature. He has learned to feel a warm sympathy with

Men, my brothers, men, the workers :

to care for all that touches their welfare ; to rejoice in the triumphs of true liberty ; to thunder in scorn and wrath against the social tyrannies that crush the souls of men, and

The social lies that warp us from the living truth.

It is true that there is no actual and visible conflict, no civil war raging to engulf him. He is not called upon to choose between his love of poetry and his love of country, nor to lay aside his singing-robcs even for a time. It is his fortune, or misfortune, to have fallen upon an age of peace and prosperity and settled government. But in that great unseen warfare which is ever waging between truth and error, right and wrong, freedom and oppression, light and darkness, he bears his part and bears it well, by writing such poems as *Locksley Hall*,

Sea Dreams, *Enoch Arden*, *Aylmer's Field*; and these entitle him to high rank as a poet of humanity.

Are they then so far apart, Milton and Tennyson, the Latin Secretary of Cromwell and the Poet Laureate of Queen Victoria,—are they so far apart in the spiritual activity of their lives as their circumstances seem to place them? Are they as unlike in the fact, as they are in the form, of their utterance on the great practical questions of life? I think not. Even here, where the lines of their work seem to diverge most widely, we may trace some deep resemblances, under apparent differences.

It is a noteworthy fact that a most important place in the thought and writing of both these men has been occupied by the subject of marriage. How many of Tennyson's poems are devoted to this theme! *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Lord of Burleigh*, *Lady Clare*, *Edwin Morris*, *The Brook*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, *Love and Duty*, *Locksley Hall*, *The Princess*, *Maud*, *Enoch Arden*, *Aylmer's Field*, *The Golden Supper*, *The Window*, *The First Quarrel*, *The Wreck*, *The Flight*, and *The Idylls of the King*, all have the thought of union between

man and woman, and the questions which arise in connection with it, at their root.

In *The Coming of Arthur*, Tennyson makes his chosen hero rest all his power upon a happy and true marriage:—

What happiness to reign a lonely king
Vext with waste dreams ? For saving I be join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything,
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live.

Compare with this Adam's complaint in Paradise:—

In solitude
What happiness ? Who can enjoy alone ?
Or all enjoying what contentment find ?

his demand for a companion equal with himself, “ fit to participate all rational delight ; ” and his description of his first sight of Eve :

She disappeared and left me dark. I wak'd
To find her, or forever to deplore
Her loss, and other pleasures all abjure.

Mark the fact that those four tremendous pamphlets on Divorce with which Milton

horrified his enemies and shocked his friends, have underlying all their errors and extravagances the great doctrine that a genuine marriage must be a true companionship and union of souls — a doctrine equally opposed to the licentious, and to the conventional, view of wedlock. This is precisely Tennyson's position. His bitterest invectives are hurled against marriages of convenience and avarice. He praises "that true marriage, that healthful and holy family life, which has its roots in mutual affection, in mutual fitness, and which is guarded by a constancy as strong as heaven's blue arch and yet as spontaneous as the heart-beats of a happy child." But in praising this, Tennyson speaks of what he has possessed and known : Milton could have spoken only of what he had desired and missed. A world-wide difference, more than enough to account for anything of incompleteness or harshness in Milton's views of women.

What gross injustice the world has done him on this point ! Married at an age when a man who has preserved the lofty ideals and personal purity of youth is peculiarly liable to deception, to a woman far below him in character and intellect, a pretty fool utterly

unfitted to take a sincere and earnest view of life or to sympathize with him in his studies ; deserted by her a few weeks after the wedding-day ; met by stubborn refusal and unjust reproaches in every attempt to reclaim and reconcile her ; accused by her family of disloyalty in politics, and treated as if he were unworthy of honourable consideration ; what wonder that his heart experienced a great revulsion, that he began to doubt the reality of such womanhood as he had described and immortalized in *Comus*, that he sought relief in elaborating a doctrine of divorce which should free him from the unworthy and irksome tie of a marriage which was in truth but an empty mockery ? That divorce doctrine which he propounded in the heat of personal indignation, disguised even from himself beneath a mask of professedly calm philosophy, was surely false, and we cannot but condemn it. But can we condemn his actual conduct, so nobly inconsistent with his own theory ? Can we condemn the man, as we see him forgiving and welcoming his treacherous wife driven by stress of poverty and danger to return to the home which she had frivolously forsaken ; welcoming also, and to the best of his ability

sheltering, her whole family of Philistines, who were glad enough, for all their pride, to find a refuge from the perils of civil war in the house of the despised schoolmaster and Commonwealth-man ; bearing patiently, for his wife's sake, with their weary presence and shallow talk in his straitened dwelling-place until the death of the father-in-law, whose sense of honour was never strong enough to make him pay one penny of his daughter's promised marriage-portion, — can we condemn Milton as we see him acting thus ? And as we see him, after a few months of happy union with a sec'rd wife, again left a widower with three daughters, two of whom, at least, never learned to love him ; blind, poor, almost friendless ; disliked and robbed by his undutiful children, who did not scruple to cheat him in the marketings, sell his books to the rag-pickers, and tell the servants that the best news they could hear would be the news of their father's death ; forced at length in very instinct of self-protection to take as his third wife a plain, honest woman who would be faithful and kind in her care of him and his house ; can we wonder if, after this experience of life, he thought somewhat doubtfully of women ?

But of woman, woman as God made her and meant her to be, woman as she is in the true purity and unspoiled beauty of her nature, he never thought otherwise than nobly and reverently. Read his sonnet to his second wife, in whom for one fleeting year his heart tasted the best of earthly joys, the joy of a perfect companionship, but who was lost to him in the birth of her first child :—

Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the old Law did save,
And such as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven, without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind;
Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness in her person shined
So clear as in no face with more delight.
But O, as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.

Surely there is no more beautiful and heartfelt praise of perfect womanhood in all literature than this ; and Tennyson has never written with more unfeigned worship of wedded love.

It is true, indeed, that Milton declares that woman is inferior to man “in the mind and

inward faculties," but he follows this declaration with the most exquisite description of her peculiar excellences :

When I approach
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
And in herself complete, so well to know
Her own, that what she wills to do or say
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best :
Authority and reason on her wait
As one intended first, not after made
Occasionally ; and to consummate all,
Greatness of mind and nobleness their seat
Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
About her as a guard angelic placed.

It is true that he teaches, in accordance with the explicit doctrine of the Bible, that it is the wife's duty to obey her husband, to lean upon, and follow, his larger strength when it is exercised in wisdom. But he never places the woman below the man, always at his side ; the divinely - dowered consort and counterpart, not the same, but equal, supplying his deficiencies and solacing his defects,

His likeness, his fit help, his other self,
with whom he may enjoy

Union of mind or in us both one soul.

And love like this

Leads up to heaven ; is both the way and guide.

Compare these teachings with those of Tennyson in *The Princess*, where under a veil of irony, jest mixed with earnest, he shows the pernicious folly of the modern attempt to change woman into a man in petticoats, exhibits the female lecturer and the sweet girl graduates in their most delightfully absurd aspect, overthrows the visionary towers of the Female College with a baby's touch, and closes the most good-humoured of satires with a picture of the true relationship of man and woman, so beautiful and so wise that neither poetry nor philosophy can add a word to it.

For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse : could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain ; his dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow ;
The man be more of woman, she of man ;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world ;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind ;
Till at the last she set herself to man
Like perfect music unto noble words.

Then comes the staterlier Eden back to men :
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm :
Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
May these things be !

A second point in which we may trace a deep resemblance between Milton and Tennyson is their intense love of country. This is not always a prominent characteristic of great poets. Indeed, we may question whether there is not usually something in the poetic temperament which unfits a man for actual patriotism, makes him an inhabitant of an ideal realm rather than a citizen of a particular country ; inclines him to be governed by disgusts more than he is inspired by enthusiasms, and to withdraw himself from a practical interest in the national welfare into the vague dreams of Utopian perfection. In Goethe we see the cold indifference of the self-centred artistic mind, careless of his country's degradation and enslavement, provided only the all-conquering Napoleon will leave him his poetic leisure and freedom. In Byron we see the wild rebelliousness of the poet of passion, deserting, disowning, and reviling his native land in the sullen fury of personal anger. But Milton and Tennyson are true patriots — Englishmen to the heart's core. They do not say, "My country, right or wrong!" They protest in noble scorn against all kinds of tyrannies and hypocrisies. They

are not bound in conscienceless servility to any mere political party. They are the partisans of England, and England to them means freedom, justice, righteousness, Christianity. Milton sees her “rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks ;” or “as an eagle, mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam ; purging and scaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance ; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.” Tennyson sings her praise as

the land that freemen till,
That sober-suited Freedom chose,
The land where, girt with friends or foes,
A man may speak the thing he will.

He honours and reveres the Queen, but it is because her power is the foundation and defense of liberty ; because of her it may be said that

Statesmen at her council met
Who knew the season when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet,

By shaping some august decree,
Which kept her throne unshaken still,
Broad-bas'd upon the people's will,
And compass'd by the inviolate sea.

Think you he would have written thus if Charles Stuart, bribe-taker, extortioner, tyrant, dignified and weak betrayer of his best friends, had been his sovereign? His own words tell us on which side he would have stood in that great revolt. In the verses written on *The Third of February*, 1852, he reproaches the Parliament for their seeming purpose to truckle to Napoleon, after the *coup d'état*, and cries :

Shall we fear him? Our own we never feared.
From our first Charles by force we wrung our claims.
Pricked by the Papal spur, we reared,
We flung the burthen of the second James.

And again, in the poem entitled *England and America in 1782*, he justifies the American Revolution as a lesson taught by England herself, and summons his country to exult in the freedom of her children.

But thou, rejoice with liberal joy!
Lift up thy rocky face,
And shatter, when the storms are black,
In many a streaming torrent back,
The seas that shock thy base.

Whatever harmonies of law
The growing world assume,

The work is thine, — the single note
From the deep chord that Hampden smote
Will vibrate to the doom.

Here is the grand Miltonic ring, not now disturbed and roughened by the harshness of opposition, the bitterness of disappointment, the sadness of despair, but rounded in the calm fulness of triumph. “The whirligig of Time brings in his revenges.” The bars of oppression are powerless to stay the tide of progress.

The old order changeth, giving place to new.
And God fulfils Himself in many ways.

If Milton were alive to-day he would find his ideals largely realized ; freedom of worship, freedom of the press, freedom of education, no longer things to be fought for, but things to be enjoyed ; the principle of popular representation firmly ingrained in the constitution of the British monarchy (which Tennyson calls “a crowned Republic”), and the spirit of “the good old cause,” the people’s cause which seemed lost when the second Charles came back, now victorious and peacefully guiding the destinies of the nation into a yet wider and more glorious liberty.

But what would be the effect of such an

environment upon such a character as his? What would Milton have been in this nineteenth century? If we can trust the prophecies of his early years; if we can regard the hints of his own preferences and plans, from whose fruition a stern sense of duty, like a fiery-sworded angel, barred him out, we must imagine the course of his life, the development of his genius, as something very different from what they actually were. An age of peace and prosperity, the comfort and quietude of a well-ordered home, freedom to pursue his studious researches and cultivate his artistic tastes to the full, an atmosphere of liberal approbation and encouragement,—circumstances such as these would have guided his life and work into a much closer parallel with Tennyson, and yet they never could have made him other than himself. For his was a seraphic spirit, strong, indomitable, unalterable; and even the most subtle influence of surroundings could never have destroyed or changed him fundamentally. So it was true, as Macaulay has said, that “from the Parliament and from the court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral rites of the Roundheads, and from

the Christmas revel of the hospitable cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which these finer elements were defiled." And yet the very process of rejection had its effect upon him. The fierce conflicts of theology and politics in which for twenty years he was absorbed left their marks upon him for good and for evil. They tried him as by fire. They brought out all his strength of action and endurance. They made his will like steel. They gave him the God-like power of one who has suffered to the uttermost. But they also disturbed, at least for a time, the serenity of his mental processes. They made the flow of his thought turbulent and uneven. They narrowed, at the same time that they intensified, his emotions. They made him an inveterate controversialist, whose God must argue and whose angels were debaters. They crushed his humour and his tenderness. Himself, however, the living poet, the supreme imagination, the seraphic utterance, they did not crush, but rather strengthened. And so it came to pass that in him we have the miracle of literature, — the lost river of

poetry springing suddenly, as at Divine command, from the bosom of the rock, no trickling and diminished rill, but a sweeping flood, laden with richest argosies of thought.

IV.

How to speak of *Paradise Lost* I know not. To call it a master-work is superfluous. To say that it stands absolutely alone and supreme is both true and false. Parts of it are like other poems, and yet there is no poem in the world like it. The theme is old ; had been treated by the author of *Genesis* in brief, by Du Bartas and other rhymers at length. The manner is old, inherited from Virgil and Dante. And yet, beyond all question, *Paradise Lost* is one of the most unique, individual, unmistakable poems in the world's literature. Imitations of it have been attempted by Montgomery, Pollok, Bickersteth, and other pious versifiers, but they are no more like the original than St. Peter's in Montreal is like St. Peter's in Rome, or than the pile of coarse-grained limestone on New York's Fifth Avenue is like the Cathedral of Milan, with its

Chanting quires,
The giant windows' blazoned fires,
The height, the space, the gloom, the glory,
A mount of marble, a hundred spires!

Imitation may be the sincerest flattery, but imitation never produces the deepest resemblance. The man who imitates is concerned with that which is outward, but kinship of spirit is inward. He who is next of kin to a master-mind will himself be too great for the work of a copyist; he will be influenced, if at all, unconsciously; and though the intellectual relationship may be expressed also in some external traits of speech and manner, the true likeness will be in the temper of the soul and the sameness of the moral purpose. Such likeness, I think, we can discern between *Paradise Lost* and Tennyson's greatest works, *The Idylls of the King* and *In Memoriam*.

I shall speak first and more briefly of the Idylls, because I intend to make them the subject of another study from a different point of view. At present we have to consider only their relations to the work of Milton. And in this connection we ought not to forget that he was the first to call attention to the legend of King Arthur as a

fit subject for a great poem. Having made up his mind to write a national epic which should do for England that which Tasso and Ariosto had done for Italy, "that which the greatest and choicest wits of Athens and Rome, and those Hebrews of old did for their country," Milton tells us that he entertained for a long time a design to

Revoke into song the kings of our island,
Arthur yet from his underground hiding stirring to warfare,
Or to tell of those that sat round him as Knights of his Table ;
Great-souled heroes unmatched, and (O might the spirit but aid me),
Shiver the Saxon phalauxes under the shock of the Britons.

The design was abandoned : but it was a fortunate fate that brought it at last into the hands of the one man, since Milton died, who was able to carry it to completion.

Compare the verse of the *Idylls* with that of *Paradise Lost*.

Both Milton and Tennyson have been led by their study of the classic poets to understand that rhyme is the least important element of good poetry ; the best music is made by the concord rather than by the unison of sounds, and the coincidence of final con-

sonants is but a slight matter compared with the cadence of syllables and the accented harmony of long vowels. Indeed it may be questioned whether the inevitable recurrence of the echo of rhyme does not disturb and break the music more than it enhances it. Certainly Milton thought so, and he frankly took great credit to himself for setting the example, “the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poems from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming.”

There were many to follow him in this path, but for the most part with ignominious and lamentable failure. They fell into the mistake of thinking that because unrhymed verse was more free it was less difficult, and, making their liberty a cloak of poetic license, they poured forth floods of accurately measured prose under the delusion that they were writing blank-verse. The fact is that this is the one form of verse which requires the most delicate ear and the most patient labour. In Cowper, Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, Browning, these preconditions are wanting. And with the possible exception of Matthew Arnold’s *Sohrab and Rustum*, the first English blank-verse worthy

to compare with that of *Paradise Lost* is found in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

There is a shade of contrast in the movement of the two poems. Each has its own distinctive quality. In Milton we observe a more stately and majestic march, more of rhythm: in Tennyson a sweeter and more perfect tone, more of melody. These qualities correspond, in verse, to form and colour in painting. We might say that Milton is the greater draughtsman, as Michael Angelo; Tennyson the better colourist, as Raphael. But the difference between the two painters is always greater than that between the two poets. For the methods by which they produce their effects are substantially the same; and their results differ chiefly as the work of a strong, but sometimes heavy, hand differs from that of a hand less powerful, but better disciplined.

De Quincey has said, somewhere or other, that finding fault with Milton's versification is a dangerous pastime. The lines which you select for criticism have a way of justifying themselves at your expense. That which you have condemned as a palpable blunder, an unpardonable discord, is manifested in the mouth of a better reader as majestically

right and harmonious. And so, when you attempt to take liberties with any passage of his, you are apt to feel as when coming upon what appears to be a dead lion in a forest. You have an uncomfortable suspicion that he may not be dead, but only sleeping; or perhaps not even sleeping, but only shamming. Many an unwary critic has been thus unpleasantly surprised. Notably Drs. Johnson and Bentley, and in a small way Walter Savage Landor, roaring over Milton's mistakes, have proved themselves distinctly asinine.

But for all that, there are mistakes in *Paradise Lost*. I say it with due fear, and not without a feeling of gratitude that the purpose of this essay does not require me to specify them. But a sense of literary candour forces me to confess the opinion that the great epic contains passages in which the heaviness of the thought has infected the verse, passages which can be read only with tiresome effort, lines in which the organ-player's foot seems to have slipped upon the pedals and made a ponderous discord. This cannot be said of the Idylls. Their music is not broken or jangled. It may never rise to the loftiest heights, but it

never falls to the lowest depths. Tennyson has written nothing so strong as the flight of Satan through Chaos, nothing so sublime as the invocation to Light, nothing so rich as the first description of Eden; but taking the blank-verse of the Idylls through and through, as a work of art, it is more finished, more expressive, more perfectly musical than that of *Paradise Lost*.

The true relationship of these poems lies, as I have said, beneath the surface. It consists in their ideal unity of theme and lesson. For what is it in fact with which Milton and Tennyson concern themselves? Not the mere story of Adam and Eve's transgression; not the legendary wars of Arthur and his knights; but the everlasting conflict of the human soul with the adversary, the struggle against sin, the power of the slightest taint of evil to infect, pollute, destroy all that is fairest and best. Both poets tell the story of a paradise lost, and lost through sin; first, the happy garden designed by God to be the home of stainless innocence and bliss, whose gates are closed for ever against the guilty race; and then, the glorious realm of peace and love and law which the strong and noble king would

make and defend amid the world's warfares, but which is secretly corrupted, undermined, destroyed at last in blackening gloom.

To Arthur, as to Adam, destruction comes through that which seems, and indeed is, the loveliest and the dearest. The beauteous mother of mankind, fairer than all her daughters since, drawn by her own highest desire of knowledge into disobedience, yields the first entrance to the fatal sin ; and Guinevere, the imperial-moulded queen, led by degrees from a true friendship into a false love for Lancelot, infects the court and the whole realm with death. Vain are all safeguards and defenses ; vain all high resolves and noble purposes ; vain the instructions of the archangel charging the possessors of Eden to

Be strong, live happy, and love ! but first of all
Him whom to love is to obey !

vain the strait vows and solemn oaths by which the founder of the Table bound his knights

To reverence the King as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ.

All in vain ! for sin comes creeping in ; and sin, the slightest, the most seeming-venial,

the most beautiful, is the seed of shame and death. This is the profound truth to which the *Idylls of the King* and *Paradise Lost* alike bear witness. And to teach this, to teach it in forms of highest art which should live forever in the imagination of the race, was the moral purpose of Milton and Tennyson.

But there is another aspect of this theme, which is hardly touched in the *Idylls*. Sin has a relation to God as well as to man, since it exists in His universe. Is it stronger than the Almighty? Is His will wrath? Is His purpose destruction? Is darkness the goal of all things, and is there no other significance in death; no deliverance from its gloomy power? In *Paradise Lost*, Milton has dealt with this problem also. Side by side with the record "of man's first disobedience" he has constructed the great argument whereby he would

Assert eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men.

The poem has, therefore, parallel with its human side, a divine side, for which we shall look in vain among the *Idylls of the King*. Tennyson has approached this problem from another standpoint in a different manner.

And if we wish to know his solution of it, his answer to the mystery of death, we must look for it in *In Memoriam*.

This poem is an elegy for Arthur Hallam, finished throughout its seven hundred and twenty-four stanzas with all that delicate care which the elegiac form requires, and permeated with the tone of personal grief, not passionate, but profound and pure. But it is such an elegy as the world has never seen before, and never will see again. It is the work of years, elaborated with such skill and adorned with such richness of poetic imagery as other men have thought too great to bestow upon an epic. It is the most exquisite structure ever reared above a human grave, more wondrous and more immortal than that world-famous tomb which widowed Artemisia built for the Carian Mausolus. But it is also something far grander and better. Beyond the narrow range of personal loss and loneliness, it sweeps into the presence of the eternal realities, faces the great questions of our mysterious existence, and reaches out to lay hold of that hope which is unseen but abiding, whereby alone we are saved. Its motto might well be given in the words of St. Paul: *For our light*

affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

At first sight it may seem almost absurd to compare the elegy with the epic, and impossible to discover any resemblance between those long-rolling, thunderous periods of blank-verse and these short swallow-flights of song which “ dip their wings in tears and skim away.” The comparison of *In Memoriam* with *Lycidas* would certainly appear more easy and obvious ; so obvious, indeed, that it has been made a thousand times, and is fluently repeated by every critic who has had occasion to speak of English elegies. But this is just one of those cases in which an external similarity conceals a fundamental unlikeness. For, in the first place, Edward King, to whose memory *Lycidas* was dedicated, was far from being an intimate friend of Milton, and his lament has no touch of the deep heart-sorrow which throbs in *In Memoriam*. And, in the second place, *Lycidas* is in no sense a metaphysical poem,

does not descend into the depths or attempt to answer the vexed questions. But *In Memoriam* is, in its very essence, profoundly and thoroughly metaphysical; and this brings it at once into close relation with *Paradise Lost*. They are the two most famous poems — with the exception of Dante's *Divine Comedy* — which deal directly with the mysteries of faith and reason, the doctrine of God and immortality.

There is a point, however, in which we must acknowledge an essential and absolute difference between the great epic and the great elegy, something deeper and more vital than any contrast of form and metre. *Paradise Lost* is a theological poem, *In Memoriam* is a religious poem. The distinction is narrow, but deep. For religion differs from theology as life differs from biology. Milton approaches the problem from the side of reason, resting, it is true, upon a supernatural revelation, but careful to reduce all its contents to a logical form, demanding a clearly-formulated and closely-linked explanation of all things, and seeking to establish his system of truth upon the basis of sound argument. His method is distinctly rational; Tennyson's is emotional. He has no linked

chain of deductive reasoning ; no sharp-cut definition of objective truths. His faith is subjective, intuitive. Where proof fails him, he will still believe. When the processes of reason are shaken, disturbed, frustrated ; when absolute demonstration appears impossible, and doubt claims a gloomy empire in the mind, then the deathless fire that God has kindled in the breast burns toward that heaven which is its source and home, and the swift answer of immortal love leaps out to solve the mystery of the grave. Thus Tennyson *feels* after God, and leads us by the paths of faith and emotion to the same goal which Milton reaches by the road of reason and logic.

Each of these methods is characteristic not only of the poet who uses it, but also of the age in which it is employed. *Paradise Lost* does not echo more distinctly the age of the Westminster divines than *In Memoriam* represents the age of Maurice and Kingsley and Robertson. It is a mistake to think that the tendency of our day is toward rationalism. That was the drift of Milton's time. Our modern movement is toward emotionalism, a religion of feeling, a subjective system in which the sentiments and

affections shall be acknowledged as lawful tests of truth. This movement has undoubtedly an element of danger in it, as well as an element of promise. It may be carried to a false extreme. But this much is clear,— it has been the strongest inspiration of the men of our own time who have fought most bravely against atheism and the cold negations of scientific despair. And the music of it is voiced forever in *In Memoriam*. It is the heart now, not the colder reason, which rises to

Assert eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men.

But the answer is none other than that which was given by the blind poet. The larger meanings of *In Memoriam* and *Paradise Lost* — whatever we may say of their lesser meanings — find their harmony in the same

Strong Son of God.

Is Tennyson a Pantheist because he speaks of

One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves ?

Then so is Milton a Pantheist when he makes the Son say to the Father,—

Thou shalt be all in all, and I in thee
 Forever, and in me all whom thou lovest.

Is Tennyson an Agnostic because he speaks of the “truths that never can be proved,” and finds a final answer to the mysteries of life only in a hope which is hidden “behind the veil”? Then so is Milton an Agnostic, because he declares

Heaven is for thee too high
 To know what passes there. Be lowly wise ;
 Think only what concerns thee and thy being.
 Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid ;
 Leave them to God above.

Is Tennyson a Universalist because he says,

Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ?

Then so is Milton a Universalist when he exclaims, —

O, goodness infinite, goodness immense,
 That all this good of evil shall produce,
 And evil turn to good !

The faith of the two poets is one; the great lesson of *In Memoriam* and *Paradise Lost* is the same. The hope of the universe is in the Son of God, whom Milton and Tennyson both call “Immortal Love.” To Him through mists and shadows we must look up,

Gladly behold, though but his utmost skirts
Of glory, and far-off his steps adore.

Thus our cry out of the darkness shall be
answered. Knowledge shall grow from more
to more.

Light after light well-used we shall attain,
And to the end persisting safe arrive.

But this can come only through self-surren-
der and obedience, only through the consecra-
tion of the free-will to God who gave it ;
and the highest prayer of the light-seeking,
upward-striving human soul is this : —

O, living will that shalt endure,
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual Rock,
Flow through our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out the dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquered years,
To one that with us works and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we love,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

TWO SPLENDID FAILURES.

TWO SPLENDID FAILURES.

IT was somewhere in the forties of this century that Edgar Allan Poe put forth a new doctrine of poetry, which, if I remember rightly, ran somewhat on this wise : ‘The greatest poems must be short. For the poetic inspiration is of the nature of a flash of lightning and endures only for a moment. But what a man writes between the flashes is worth comparatively little. All long poems are therefore, of necessity, poor in proportion to their length,—or at best they are but a mass of pudding in which the luscious plums of poetry are embedded and partially concealed.’

This ingenious theory (which has a slight air of special pleading) has never been generally accepted. Indeed, at the very time when Mr. Poe was propounding it, and using the early poems of Tennyson as an illustration, the world at large was taking for granted the truth of the opposite theory, and demanding that the newly discovered poet

should prove his claim to greatness by writing something long. "We want to see," said one of the best of the critics in 1842, "a poem of power and *sustained energy*. Mr. Tennyson already enjoys a high position; let him aim at one still higher; why not the highest?"

I believe that it was, at least partly, in answer to demands of this kind that *The Princess* appeared in 1847. And it is a matter of well-authenticated tradition that *Maud*, which was published in 1855, was expanded out of the earlier lyric, —

O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain, —

in consequence of a remark of Sir John Simeon, who said that it seemed to him as if something more were necessary to explain the story of this poem. If Mr. Poe had been living and lecturing he might have adduced *The Princess* and *Maud* in triumphant vindication of his theory that brevity is the soul of poetry; and though the conclusion would have been false, the illustrations would have been in a measure true. For unless I am mistaken, neither of these poems belongs to Tennyson's greatest work. Taken as a whole they are two

splendid failures. Splendid, because they both contain passages of the highest beauty and power, —

Jewels five-words-long
That on the stretch'd forefinger of all Time
Sparkle forever.

Failures, not because they are long, but because their length is evidently greater than their excellence.

The Princess is confessedly a *Medley*: now a medley cannot possibly be great, although parts of it may be very good. It must fail in unity, which is an essential mark of a true work of art. And if it be said that life itself is a medley in which jest is mixed with earnest, the answer is that life is not art, and that the artist who ignores the distinction between them will certainly spoil his work.

The explanation of the design and style of the poem is given in a brief Prologue and Conclusion written in domestic blank-verse. A company of visitors is gathered at the country-place of a gentleman of the name of Vivian; among them a poet, who goes through the house with his friend Walter and inspects the curios, and reads in an old chronicle about a lady of the family who had

been a prodigious fighter and had performed miracles of prowess in battle. Then they stroll out to the ruined abbey, —

And here we lit on Aunt Elizabeth
And Lilia with the rest, and lady friends —

and after some desultory conversation upon the great advantages of a scientific barbecue which the tenants of the estate are enjoying upon the lawn, the talk falls upon education, and then upon woman's education, and then upon the emancipation of woman. After this sad catastrophe they agree that the time must be killed somehow or other, and accordingly the seven gentlemen tell a combination story about a Princess who set out to be the deliverer of her sex by founding a Female University. The tale is strangely mixed

To suit with time and place,
A Gothic ruin and a Grecian house,
A talk of college and of ladies' rights,
A feudal knight in silken masquerade,
And, yonder, shrieks and strange experiments
For which the good Sir Ralph had burnt them all —
This *were* a medley! we should have him back
Who told the Winter's Tale to do it for us.

But unfortunately this gentleman did not appear; and when the poet was asked to dress up the seven-fold tale in verse, being

in a strait between the male part of the company who desired him to make a burlesque of it, and the female part who wanted a genuine epic, he compromised and

 moved as in a strange diagonal
 And maybe neither pleased myself nor them.

This diagonal movement is the essential fault of the poem ; for it is not really a diagonal but a zigzag, and we can never tell how to trim our sails to catch the force of the breeze. At one moment the poet seems to be making fun of the woman's college, and the next moment he is very much in earnest. As a serious poem the *Princess* is too amusing : as an humorous poem it is too serious.

One result of the strange diagonal of the *Princess* is that the style seems often false and insincere. It dresses up the most commonplace and unpoetical facts in elaborate verbiage. Thus the poet tells us that the Prince sat down and wrote

 In such a hand as when a field of corn
 Bows all its ears before the roaring East ;

that is to say, he slanted his letters like a lady. Again he describes the eight daughters of the plough who worked at the female university by saying

Each was like a Druid rock,
 Or like a spire of land that stands apart,
 Cleft from the main and wail'd about with mews;

that is to say they were big women. Again he paints the Lady Blanche as a tiger-cat,

With all her autumn tresses falsely brown;

that is to say she dyed her hair.

And the Princess herself, the founder and head of the eollege,— what an amazing young woman she is! Her father, King Gama, says of her,—

Awful odes she wrote,
 Too awful, sure, for what they treated of,
 But all she is and does is awful.

He tells the truth about her; for she keeps a pair of leopards as pets; and when she wants to say that the sun is setting, she remarks,

There sinks the nebulous star we call the sun
 If that hypothesis of theirs be sound;

and she habitually speaks of herself in the first person plural, as if she were an editor. Truly an awful person, and one eannot help wondering how the Prince got on with her after they were married.

The Princess was the first of Tennyson's poems to become widely known in America, and it is a eurious fact that the most favour-

able, as well as the most extensive, criticisms of it have come from this side of the Atlantic. First, there was Professor James Hadley's thoughtful review in 1849; then Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman's eloquent paragraphs in "Victorian Poets," then Mr. S. E. Dawson's admirable monograph published in Montreal; and finally Mr. William J. Rolfe's scholarly "variorum" edition of *The Princess*, with notes. Mr. Dawson's excellent little book was the occasion of drawing from Tennyson a letter, which seems to me one of the most valuable, as it is certainly one of the longest, pieces of prose that he has ever given to the public. It describes his manner of observing nature and his practice of making a rough mental note in four or five words, like an artist's sketch, of whatever strikes him as picturesque, that is to say, fit to go into a picture. *The Princess* is full of the results of this kind of work, scattered here and there like flowers in a tangle of meadow-grass. For example, take these two descriptions of dawn:—

Notice of a change in the dark world
Was lispt about the acacias, and a bird
That early woke to feed her little ones
Sent from her dewy breast a cry for light.—

Morn in the white wake of the morning star
Came furrowing all the orient into gold.—

These are as different in feeling as possible, yet each is true, and each is fitted to the place in which it stands; for the one describes the beginning of a day among the splendours of the royal college before it was broken up; the other describes the twilight of the morning in which the Princess began to yield her heart to the tender touch of love. Or take again these two pictures of storm:—

And standing like a stately pine
Set in a cataract on an island-crag,
When storm is on the heights, and right and left
Suck'd from the dark heart of the long hills roll
The torrents, dash'd to the vale.—

As one that climbs a peak to gaze
O'er land and main, and sees a great black cloud
Drag inward from the deeps, a wall of night,
Blot out the slope of sea from verge to shore,
And suck the blinding splendour from the sand,
And quenching lake by lake and tarn by tarn,
Expunge the world.—

Tennyson says that the latter of these passages is a recollection of a coming tempest watched from the summit of Snowdon. Work like this, so clear, so powerful, so exact, would go far to redeem any poem, however tedious.

But better still is the love-scene in the last canto, where the poet drops the tantalizing vein of mock-heroics, and tells us his real thought of woman's place and work in the world, in words which are as wise as they are beautiful. I have quoted them in another place and may not repeat them here. But there is one passage which I cannot forbear to give, because it seems to describe something of Tennyson's own life.

Alone, from earlier than I know,
 Immersed in rich foreshadowings of the world,
 I loved the woman: he that doth not, lives
 A drowning life, besotted in sweet self,
 Or pines in sad experience worse than death,
 Or keeps his wing'd affections clipt with crime:
 Yet was there one thro' whom I loved her, one
 Not learned, save in gracious household ways,
 Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
 No angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
 In angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
 Interpreter between the gods and men,
 Who look'd all native to her place, and yet
 On tiptoe seemed to touch upon a sphere
 Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
 Sway'd to her from their orbits as they moved,
 And girded her with music. Happy he
 With such a mother! faith in womankind
 Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
 Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
 He shall not blind his soul with clay.

This is worthy to be put beside Words-worth's —

“A creature not too bright or good
For human nature’s daily food.”

But best of all are that immortal lyric, —

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean, —

and the songs which divide the cantos. Tennyson tells us in a letter that these songs were not an after-thought; that he had designed them from the first, but doubted whether they were necessary, and did not overcome his laziness to insert them until the third edition in 1850. It may be that he came as near as this to leaving out the jewels which are to the poem what the stained-glass windows are to the confused vastness of York Minster, — the light and glory of the structure. It would have been a fatal loss. For he has never done anything more pure and perfect than these songs, clear and simple and musical as the chime of silver bells, deep in their power of suggestion as music itself. Not a word in them can be omitted or altered, neither can they be translated. The words *are* the songs. “Sweet and low,” “Ask me no more,” and “Blow, bugle, blow” will be remembered and sung, long after men have forgotten all about the awful Princess, and ceased to follow the serio-comic adventures of her feeble Prince.

Maud is altogether lyrical. And herein lies its weakness. It is an attempt to make a whole drama out of songs; in other words, to perform the impossible. A single mood, a single passion, may be expressed in this form; even a character may be lyrically embodied or at least suggested. Robert Browning has done some powerful work of this kind in his *Dramatic Lyrics*, and Tennyson has rivaled it, perhaps even surpassed it, in the two *Locksley Halls*, *The Wreck*, and *Rizpah*. But a Lyrical Drama is quite another affair. The secret of these things is that the impassioned utterance is brief, condensed, direct. If it were prolonged, and turned this way and that way through varying emotions, and made to do all sorts of descriptive and explanatory work, it would lose its magic. Sometimes it would fall far below the level of feeling at which real music is possible. At other times it would be forced into an artificial excess of passion, and sound false and strained. Both of these faults are illustrated in *Maud*. It is the most uneven of Tennyson's poems. There are long passages of measured prose in it,—and roughly measured at that, with false rhymes stuck in them. Here is one of the worst.

For I am not invited,
But, with the Sultan's *pardon*,
I am all as well delighted,
For I know her own rose-garden,
And mean to linger in it
Till the dancing will be *over*;
And then, oh then, come out to me
For a minute, but for a *minute*,
Come out to your own true *lover*,
That your true lover may see
Your glory also, and *render*
All homage to his own darling,
Queen Maud in all her *splendour*.

Who would dream that this was written by the poet of *Locksley Hall*! It sounds like Laura Matilda, and sends a feeling of weariness through the soul akin to that which comes of listening to a concert of amateurs on the pianoforte.

Even harder to bear, however, than these passages of imperfectly versified commonplace are those in which the emotion is stimulated to the verge of hysterics, and the song rises to a thin, shrill pitch of excitement, almost a scream. Take for instance the bitter invective against Peace in the opening verses, or the acid abuse of Maud's brother, —

That oil'd and curl'd Assyrian Bull
Smelling of musk and of insolence.

Surely this is mockery run mad. Who that has ever seen the face of the winged bull on the Assyrian monuments could trace any resemblance between that calm, mysterious, majestic creature and a full-fed Englishman? Who can tell us what is the precise smell of insolence?

Not even the love-passages are free from exaggeration and over-strain. Why should the lover say that Maud has

Feet like sunny gems on an English green?

The foot is far too large to be compared to a gem, and unless a person happens to be barefoot it does not look in the least sunny, but rather black. Or again, why should he call her "beautiful creature"? The phrase is hackneyed. And why should he go on like this?

But if *I* be dear to some one else,
Then *I* should be to myself more dear.
Shall I not take care of all that *I* think,
Yea, ev'n of wretched meat and drink,
If *I* be dear,
If *I* be dear to some one else.

If his meat and drink were wretched, there was no reason for his taking care of them. He thought too much of himself all the time. He was always talking of what Maud

was to do for him, never of what he would do for her. He regarded her beauty as

The one bright thing to save
My yet young life in the wilds of Time,
 Perhaps from madness, perhaps from crime,
 Perhaps from a selfish grave.

Some one may say that all this criticism of words and phrases, rhymes and rhythms is only “seed-picking.” True. But let it be remembered that too many seeds will spoil the taste of the finest berry.

Moreover, when we turn to look more closely at the teaching of *Maud*, — assuming that it has a moral purpose, — we find that it is questionable. It was written at the time when England was on fire with excitement about the Crimean war. Public opinion was divided: on one side were men like Cobden and Bright who opposed the war as unnecessary and unchristian; on the other side were men like Lord Palmerston who held that it was the only means of restoring the glory of England. *Maud* was regarded as a war-poem, and I think justly. After forty years of peace the poet cried,

Hail once more to the banner of battle unroll'd!

Looking back from this distance to the days of the Crimea, it is strange to note the

reasons which he gives for his enthusiasm. He asserts that the cause of the war was “pure and true,” and the purpose of it was that

God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant liar,
to wit, the Emperor Nicholas. But really the question at issue was simply whether or not Russia should be allowed to exercise protection over the oppressed Christian populations of Turkey, a claim which England and France resisted merely because they were not willing to have the Turkish Empire interfered with,—and this was hardly a cause which was fitted to make England regard herself as the trustee and executrix of God's just wrath.

The poet further expresses the conviction that the war will bring a harvest of renown to his country : —

And many a darkness into the light will leap
And shine in the sudden making of splendid names.

Nothing could be further from the fact. For while the Crimean campaigns destroyed several flimsy reputations, only one really great military fame came out of them, and that belonged to the Russian general, Todleben.

Again the poet declares that war will

clear away the evils of commercial greed and corruption that infest the time of peace :—

For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder round by the hill,
And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the three-decker out of the foam,
That the smooth-faced, snub-nosed rogue would leap from his counter and till,
And strike, if he could, were it but with his cheating yardwand, home.

But war in general has no such purifying effect as to transform a dishonest tailor into a great-souled hero, without further notice. On the contrary, instead of beating his yardwand into a sword and marching out against the enemy, the cheater will do his best to get a government contract and grow rich in supplying the soldiers with shoddy overcoats at high prices. That, in fact, was precisely the experience of England in her Crimean enterprise. The corruptions, confusions, and sufferings of peace were intensified. The soldiers encamped before Sebastopol went barefoot in the snow, because the consignments of boots which were sent out to them were discovered to be all for the left foot. They starved, because the army-contractors furnished them with meat

which could not be eaten. They died miserably in the hospitals at Scutari, because the medicines which were provided for them were worthless, and the stores which they should have received were left to moulder at Varna or were never unloaded from the vessels in Balaklava bay. Twenty-four thousand Englishmen died to uphold the dominion of the Turk in Europe: four thousand of them fell in battle, twenty thousand perished miserably of disease and hunger, cold and neglect. That was the Crimean war which the hero of *Maud* hailed as the redemption of England from the horrors of peace.

Perhaps it may be said that Tennyson himself is not responsible for this doctrine. It does not represent his own opinion. It is dramatic, and intended to show what such a man as Maud's lover would have felt and thought about war and peace. On this ground it is possible to defend the poem as a painting of character, and Mr. Richard Holt Hutton conducts this defense with the greatest skill and boldness when he says: "Never was any cry more absurd than the cry made against *Maud* for the sympathy it was supposed to show with

hysterical passion. What it *was* meant to be, and was, though inadequately,—the failure being due, not to sympathy with hysterics, but to the zeal with which Mr. Tennyson strove to caricature hysterics,—was an exposure of hysterics."

Willingly do we admit the plea, and love it for its very boldness. But even with the strongest inclination to use it for all that it is worth we can hardly feel that it justifies *Maud* as a work of art. Doubtless there are men in the world like this unfortunate lover,—morbid, sentimental, spasmodic,—men who look on all things through a mist of personal passion and are easily moved to hatred, despair, ecstasy, jealousy, rage, and madness; there are such men, but they are not fit for heroes, and the art that chooses them is in danger of sinking to their level and becoming a mere study of morbid pathology. That is the fatal defect of many of our modern novels and plays. They turn upon "sickly passions over-wrought." Far be it from me to maintain that art must only concern itself with personages who are altogether sound and strong and successful. That would exclude tragedy altogether. But if an imagi-

nary character is to be truly tragical and "purify our hearts," as Aristotle said, "by pity and terror," it must have something of grandeur and dignity. Here lies the difference between tragedy and melodrama. Hamlet, Othello, Samson Agonistes, Egmont, Wallenstein, the master of Ravenswood, Luria,—these are noble sufferers. But the hero of *Maud*,—with his intense egotism, his affectations, his misanthropy, his alternations from fierce raving to foolish gushing,—this lean, sallow, atrabilious, hypochondriacal personage, why did Maud fall in love with him? As an object of affection he is utterly improbable; and even as an object of pity he is difficult. What sane mind can sympathize with him? What is there to redeem him from oblivion?

Only this: the gift of song, which sometimes descends upon the weakest and most wayward, and draws from a wasted and unlovely life a few tones of ravishing sweetness,—not harmonies, for harmony belongs to the broader mind, but melodies which catch the heart and linger in the memory forever. Strains of this music come to us from *Maud*, and best of all, those three wonderful lyrics: the song of triumphant love,—

I have led her home, my love, my only friend.
There is none like her, none,—

the nocturne that rises like the breath of
passion from among the flowers,—

Come into the garden, *Maud*,—
and the lament out of which the poem was
unfolded,—

O that 'twere possible,
After long grief and pain,
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again!

Splendid, magical, unforgetable, — when I
remember these things it comes into my heart
to repent of having called *Maud* a failure.

THE IDYLLS OF THE KING.

THE IDYLLS OF THE KING.

IN the middle of the nineteenth century three great artists set themselves at work to embody their conceptions of human life and destiny in the forms of art.

Victor Hugo was the first. He tells us, in one of his prefaces, that it was his design to describe “the threefold conflict of man: in religion, against the *ananké* of dogmas; in society, against the *ananké* of laws; in nature, against the *ananké* of things.” The results of his labours were *Notre Dame de Paris*, *Les Misérables*, and *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*.

Richard Wagner was the second. It was in 1857 that he turned from the Nibelungen legends to the Arthurian cycle, and made the story of *Tristan and Isolde* a musical vehicle for his theory, derived from Schopenhauer, that the essence of sin is the desire of personal existence. This opera was followed by *Parsifal*, in which he taught that the essence of virtue is compassion for the

sufferings of others. It was his intention to write a third opera called *Die Sieger* or *Die Büsser*, in which the essence of holiness should be shown as the resignation of the desire for life. Thus his great trilogy was meant to be the pessimistic philosophy set to music.¹

The third artist was Alfred Tennyson. His purpose was to depict the warfare of humanity in a poem. Like Wagner, he turned to the past for his material, and was attracted by the mystical beauty of the Arthurian legends. In these antique myths he desired to embody his own theory of human life. Tristram and Percivale become living characters in his poetry as truly as in the music of Wagner. The latest great picture of man's conflict with sin and fate is *The Idylls of the King*.

The methods of the three artists are as wide apart as France, Germany, and England. Their standpoints have nothing in common. And yet, because they have all recognized that the only real history, the only true tragedy, is the tragic history of the soul of man, they have won a common triumph. Victor Hugo's romances, Richard

¹ Cf. the admirable article by Mr. William F. Apthorp in *Scribner's Magazine*.

Wagner's music-dramas, and Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls* are the most striking and characteristic art-works of the nineteenth century.

Critics have hitherto failed to perceive the relation between these contemporary master-pieces. The difference of form has concealed the identity of theme. The oppositions of doctrine have hidden the sympathy of art. For the present it may be impossible to make a just comparison of the novelist, the musician, and the poet. At all events I do not propose to try it in this essay, but shall confine myself to the study of the *Idylls of the King*, from a modern standpoint, as a product of art and as a solution of the problem of life.

I.

The history of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* is one of the most curious and unlikely things in all the annals of literature. Famous novels have so often been written piecemeal and produced in parts, that readers of fiction have made a necessity of virtue, and learned to add to their faith, patience. Important poems, also, have come out in this periodic fashion. The chief examples that now occur to me are *Childe Harold* and the forever unfinishable *Christabel*, the latter

affording a sad instance of faith deceived, for it is evident that Coleridge never knew the end of that story, and so patienee did not have her perfect work.

But that a great poet should be engaged with his largest theme for more than half a century ; that he should toueh it first with a lyric ; then with an epical fragment and three more lyries ; then with a poem which is suppressed as soon as it is written ; then with four romantic idylls, followed, ten years later, by four others, and two years later by two others, and thirteen years later by yet another idyll, which is to be placeed, not before or after the rest, but in the very centre of the cycle ; that he should begin with the end, and continue with the beginning, and end with the middle of the story, and produce at last a poem which certainly has more epical grandeur and completeness than anything that has been made in English since Milton died, is a thing so marvellous that no man would credit it save at the sword's point of faet. And yet this is the exact record of Tennyson's dealing with the Arthurian legend. *The Lady of Shalott*, that dreamlike foreshadowing of the story of *Elaine*, was published in 1832 ; *St. Agnes*

in 1837, *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere* in 1842. Underneath their smooth music and dainty form they hide the deeper conceptions of character and life which the poet afterwards worked out more clearly and fully. They compare with the *Idylls* as a cameo with a statue. But the germ of the whole story of the fall of the Round Table lies in this description of Guinevere :

She looked so lovely, as she swayed
The rein with dainty finger-tips,
A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips.

Morte d'Arthur was printed in the same volume and marks the beginning of a new manner of treatment, not lyrical, but epic. It is worth while to notice the peculiar way in which it is introduced. A brief prelude, in Tennyson's conversational style, brings the poem before us as the fragment of an *Epic of King Arthur*, which had contained twelve cantos, but which the poet, being discontented with their antiquated style, and regarding them as

Faint Homeric echoes, nothing worth,

had determined to burn. This one book had been picked from the hearth by a friend, and was the sole relic of the conflagration. Now I do not imagine that we are to interpret this conversation so literally as to conclude that Tennyson had actually written and destroyed eleven other books upon this subject; for though he has exercised a larger wisdom of suppression in regard to his immature work than almost any other poet, such a wholesale consumption of his offspring would have an almost Saturnine touch about it. But we may certainly infer that he had contemplated the idea of an Arthurian epic, and had abandoned it after severe labour as impracticable, and that he had intended not to conclude the poem with the death of Arthur, but to follow it with a sequel; for we must observe the fact, which has hitherto escaped the notice of the critics, that this resued fragment was not the twelfth but the eleventh canto in the original design. We cannot help wondering what the conclusion would have been if this first plan had been carried out. Perhaps some vision of the island valley of Avilion; perhaps some description of the return of the King in modern guise as the founder of a new order of

chivalry ; but whatever it might have been we can hardly regret its loss, for it is evident now that the *Morte d'Arthur* forms the true and inevitable close of the story.

How long the poet held to his decision of abandoning the subject, we cannot tell. The first sign that he had begun to work at it again was in 1857, when he printed a poem called *Enid and Nimue ; or, The True and the False*. This does not seem to have satisfied his fastidious taste, for it was never published, though a few copies are said to be extant in private hands. In June, 1858, Clough "heard Tennyson read a third Arthur poem,—the detection of Guinevere and the last interview with Arthur." In 1859 appeared the first volume, entitled *Idylls of the King*, with a motto from the old chronicle of Joseph of Exeter,—" *Flos regum Arthurus.*" The book contained four idylls: *Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere*,—respectively the third, fifth, sixth, and tenth in the present series. They were received with high applause, and ten thousand copies were issued within six weeks. In 1862 there was a new edition, with a dedication to the Prince Consort. In 1870, four more idylls were published: *The Coming*

of Arthur, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*,—respectively the first, the seventh, the eighth, and the eleventh, in the order as it stands now. Of this volume, forty thousand copies were ordered in advance. In 1872, *Gareth and Lynette* and *The Last Tournament* were produced,—the second and the ninth parts of the cycle. In 1885, the volume entitled *Tiresias and other Poems* contained an idyll with the name of *Balin and Balan*, which was designated in a note as “an introduction to *Merlin and Vivien*,” and thus took the fourth place in the series.

I have been particular in tracing the order of these poems thus carefully because it seems to me that the manner of their production throws light upon several important points. Leaving out of view the four Arthurian lyrics, as examples of a style of treatment which was manifestly too light for the subject; setting aside also the first draught of the *Morte d'Arthur*, as a fragment whose full meaning and value the poet himself did not recognize until later; we observe that the significance of the story of Arthur and the legends that clustered about it was clearly seen by Tennyson somewhere about

the year 1857, and that he then began to work upon it with a large and positive purpose. For at least thirty years he has been steadily labouring to give it form and substance; but the results of his work have been presented to the world in a sequence of which he alone has held the clue: the third, the fifth, the sixth, the tenth, the first, the seventh, the eighth, the eleventh, the second, the ninth, the fourth,—such has been the extraordinary order of parts in which this work has been published.

Now this fact will account, first of all, for the failure of the public to estimate the poems in their right relation and at their true worth. Their beauty of imagery and versification was at once acknowledged; but as long as they were regarded as separate pictures, as long as their succession and the connection between them were concealed, it was impossible to form any complete judgment of their meaning or value. As Wagner said of his *Siegfried*: “It cannot make its right and unquestionable impression as a *single* whole, until it is allotted its necessary place in the *complete* whole. Nothing must be left to be supplemented by thought or reflection: every reader of un-

prejudiced human feeling must be able to comprehend *the whole* through his artistic perceptions, because then only will he be able rightly to understand the single incidents.”¹

In the second place, this fact makes clear to us the reason and justification of the general title which Tennyson has given to these poems. He has been criticised very frequently for calling them Idylls. Even so sound a judge as Mr. Richard Holt Hutton — *facile princeps* among English critics — has remarked upon the name as an instance of “unfortunate modesty.” And if we held the word to its narrower meaning, — “a short, highly wrought poem of a descriptive and pastoral character,” — it certainly seems inappropriate. But if we go back to the derivation of the word, and remember that it comes from *εἶδος*, which means not merely the form, the figure, the appearance of anything, but more particularly that form which is characteristic and distinctive, the ideal element, corresponding to the Latin *species*, we can see that Tennyson was justified in adapting and using it for his purpose. He intended to make pictures, highly wrought,

¹ Wagner’s letter to Liszt, November 20, 1851.

carefully finished, full of elaborate and significant details. But each one of these pictures was to be animated with an idea, clear, definite, unmistakable. It was to make a form express a soul. It was to present a type, not separately, but in relation to other types. This was the method which he had chosen. His design was not purely classical, nor purely romantic, but something between the two, like the Italian Gothic in architecture. He did not propose to tell a single straightforward story for the sake of the story; nor to bring together in one book a mass of disconnected tales and legends, each of which might just as well have stood alone. He proposed to group about a central figure a number of other figures, each one of which should be as finished, as complete, as expressive, as he could make it, and yet none of which could be clearly understood except as it stood in its own place in the circle. For this kind of work he needed to find or invent a name. It may be that the word "Idylls" does not perfectly express the meaning. But at least there is no other word in the language which comes so near to it.

In the third place, now that we see the

Idylls all together, standing in their proper order and relation, now that we perceive that with all their diversity they do indeed belong to the King, and revolve about him as stars about a central sun, we are able to appreciate the foree and grandeur of the poet's creative idea which could sustain and guide him through such long and intreicate labour and produce at last, from an apparent ehaos of material, an harmonious work of art of a new order. For this was the defect, hitherto, of the romantic writers, descending by ordinary generation from Sir Walter Seott, — that their work had laeked unity; it was eonfused, fragmentary, inorganic. And this was the defect, hitherto, of the classieal writers, deseending by ordinary generation from Alexander Pope, — that their work had laeked life, interest, colour, detail. But Tennyson has succeeded, at least better than any other English poet, in fulfilling the propheey which Victor Hugo made in his critieism of *Quentin Durward*:

“Après le roman pittoresque mais prosaïque de Walter Seott, il restera un autre roman à créer, plus beau et plus complet eneore selon nous. C'est le roman à la fois drame et épopée, pittoresque mais poétique,

réel mais idéal, vrai mais grand, qui en-
châssera Walter Scott dans Homère.”

II.

The material which Tennyson has used for his poem is the strange, complex, mystical story of King Arthur and his Round Table. To trace the origin of this story would lead us far afield and entangle us in the thickets of controversy which are full of thorns. Whether Arthur was a real king who ruled in Britain after the departure of the Romans, and founded a new order of chivalry, and defeated the heathen in various more or less bloody battles, as Nennius and other professed historians have related; or whether he was merely “a solar myth,” as the Vicomte de la Villemarqué has suggested; whether that extremely patriotic Welshman, Geoffrey of Monmouth, commonly called “the veracious Geoffrey,” who wrote in 1138 a full account of Arthur’s glorious achievements, really deserved his name; or whether his chronicle was merely, as an irreverent Dutch writer has said, “a great, heavy, long, thick, palpable, and most impudent lie;” whether the source of the story was among the misty mountains

of Wales or among the castles of Brittany, — all these are questions which lead aside from the purpose of this essay. This much is certain : in the twelfth century the name of King Arthur had come to stand for an ideal of royal wisdom, chivalric virtue, and knightly prowess which was recognized alike in England and France and Germany. His story was told again and again by Trouvère and Minnesinger and prose romancer. In camp and court and cloister, on the banks of the Loire, the Rhine, the Thames, men and women listened with delight to the description of his character and glorious exploits. A vast undergrowth of legends sprang up about him. The older story of Merlin the Enchanter ; the tragic tale of Sir Lancelot and his fatal love ; the adventures of Sir Tristan and Sir Gawaine ; the mystical romance of the Saint Graal, with its twin heroes of purity, Percivale and Galahad, — these and many other tales of wonder and of woe, of amorous devotion and fierce conflict and celestial vision, were woven into the Arthurian tapestry. It extended itself in every direction, like a vast forest ; the paths crossing and recrossing each other ; the same characters appearing and disappearing in

ever-changing disguises ; beauteous ladies and valiant knights and wicked magicians and pious monks coming and going as if there were no end of them ; so that it is almost impossible for the modern reader to trace his way through the confusion, and he feels like the traveller who complained that he "could not see the wood for the trees."

It was at the close of the age of chivalry, in the middle of the fifteenth century, when the inventions of gunpowder and printing had begun to create a new order of things in Europe, that an English knight, Sir Thomas Mallory by name, conceived the idea of re-writing the Arthurian story in his own language, and gathering as many of these tangled legends as he could find into one complete and connected narrative. He must have been a man of genius, for his book was more than a mere compilation from the French. He not only succeeded in bringing some kind of order out of the confusion ; he infused a new and vigorous life into the ancient tales, and clothed them in fine, simple, sonorous prose, so that his *Morte d'Arthur* is entitled to rank among the best things in English literature. William Caxton, the famous printer, was one of the first to reeog-

nize the merits of the book, and issued it from his press at Westminster, in 1485, with a delightful preface — in which he tells what he thought of the story. After a naïve and intrepid defence of the historical reality of Arthur, which he evidently thinks it would be as sacrilegious to doubt as to question the existence of Joshua, or king David, or Judas Maccabeus, he goes on to say: “Herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renommee. And for to pass the time this book shall be pleasant to read in, but for to give faith and belief that all is true that is contained herein, ye be at your liberty: but all is written for our doctrine, and for to beware that we fall not to vice nor sin, but to exercise and follow virtue, by the which we may come and attain to good fame and renown in this life, and after this short and transitory life to come into everlasting bliss in heaven; the which He grant us that reigneth in heaven, the blessed Trinity. Amen.”

This pleasant and profitable book was for

several generations the favorite reading of the gentlemen of England. After falling into comparative obscurity for a while, it was brought back into notice and favour in the early part of the present century. In 1816 two new editions of it were published, the first since 1634; and in the following year another edition was brought out, with an introduction and notes by Southey. It was doubtless through the pages of Mallory that Tennyson made acquaintance with the story of Arthur, and from these he has drawn most of his materials for the Idylls. One other source must be mentioned: In 1838 Lady Charlotte Guest published *The Mabinogion*, a translation of the ancient Welsh legends contained in the "red book of Hergest," which is in the library of Jesus College at Oxford. From this book Tennyson has taken the story of Geraint and Enid.

When we turn now to look at the manner in which the poet has used his materials, we observe two things: first, that he has taken such liberties with the outline of the story as were necessary to adapt it to his own purpose; and second, that he has thrown back into it the thoughts and feelings of his own age.

In speaking of the changes which he has made in the story, I do not allude to the omission of minor characters and details, nor to the alterations in the order of the narrative, but to changes of much deeper significance. Take for example the legend of Merlin: Mallory tells us that the great Mage "fell in a dote on a damsle that light Nimue and would let her have no rest, but always he would be with her. And so he followed her over land and sea. But she was passing weary of him and would fain have been delivered of him, for she was afraid of him because he was a devil's son. And so on a time it happed that Merlin shewed to her in a rock, whereas was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, that went under a great stone. So by her subtle working she made Merlin to go under that stone, to let her into of the marvels there, but she wrought so there for him that he came never out for all the craft that he could do. And so she departed and left Merlin." How bald and feeble is this narrative compared with the version which Tennyson has given! He has created the character of Vivien, the woman without a conscience, a brilliant, baleful star, a feminine Iago. He has made

her, not the pursued, but the pursuer, — the huntress, but of another train than Dian's. He has painted those weird scenes in the forest of Broceliande, where the earthly wisdom of the magician proves powerless to resist the wiles of a subtler magic than his own. He has made Merlin yield at last to an appeal for protection which might have deceived a nobler nature than his. He tells the ancient charm in a moment of weakness ; and while he sleeps, Vivien binds him fast with his own enchantment. He lies there, in the hollow oak, as dead,

And lost to life and use and name and fame,
while she leaps down the forest crying
“Fool !” and exulting in her triumph. It
is not a pleasant story. In some respects it
is even repulsive : it was meant to be so.
But it has a power in it that was utterly un-
known to the old legend ; it is the familiar
tale of Sophocles' Ajax, or of Samson and
Delilah, told with unrivalled skill and beauty
of language.

There is another change, of yet greater im-
portance, which affects not a single idyll, but
the entire cycle. Mallory has made the down-
fall of the Round Table and the death of
Arthur follow, at least in part, a great wrong

which the King himself had committed. Modred, the traitor, is represented as the son of Bellicent, whom Arthur had loved and betrayed in his youth, not knowing that she was his own half-sister. Thus the story becomes a tragedy of Nemesis. The King is pursued and destroyed, like Oedipus in the Greek drama, by the consequences of his own unconscious, youthful sin. Tennyson has entirely eliminated this element. He makes the King say of Modred,

I must strike against the man they call
My sister's son — no kin of mine.

He traces the ruin of the realm to other causes, — the transgression of Lancelot and Guinevere, the corruption of the court through the influence of Vivien, and the perversion of Arthur's ideals among his own followers.

Mr. Swinburne — the most eloquent of dogmatists — asserts that this change is a fatal error, that the old story was infinitely nobler and more poetic, and that Tennyson has ruined it in the telling. Lavish in his praise of other portions of the Laureate's work, he has been equally lavish in his blame of the Idylls. He calls them the “Morte d'Albert, or Idylls of the Prince Consort ;” he pours out the vials of his

contempt upon the character of “the blameless king,” and declares that it presents the very poorest and most pitiful standard of duty or of heroism. And all this wrath, so far as I can understand it, is caused chiefly by the fact that Tennyson has chosen to free Arthur from the taint of incest, and represent him, not as the victim of an inevitable tragic destiny, but rather as a pure, brave soul, who fights in one sense vainly, but in another and a higher sense successfully, against the conscious and voluntary forces of evil as they exist and work in the world around him.

But when we come to look more closely at Mr. Swinburne’s criticism, we can see that it is radically unjust because it is based upon a profound and incurable ignorance. He does not seem to know that the element of Arthur’s spiritual glory belongs to the ancient story just as much as the darker element of blind sin, clinging shame, and remorseless fate. At one time, the King is described as the very flower of humanity, the most perfect man that God had made since Adam; at another time he is exhibited as a slayer of innocents planning to destroy all the “children born of lords and

ladies, on May-day," because Merlin had predicted that one of them would be his own rival and destroyer. Mallory has woven together these incongruous threads after the strangest fashion. But no one who has read his book can doubt which of the two is the stronger and the more important. It is the glory of Arthur, his superiority to his own knights, his noble purity and strength, that really control the story; and the other, darker thread sinks gradually out of sight, becomes more and more obscure, until finally it is lost, and Arthur's name is inscribed upon his tomb as *Rex quondam, rexque futurus*. Now it was open to Tennyson to choose which of the threads he would follow; but it was impossible to follow both. He would have had no hero for his poem, he would have been unable to present any consistent picture of the King unless he had exercised a liberty of selection among these incoherent and at bottom contradictory elements which Mallory had vainly tried to blend. If he had intended to make a tragedy after the old Greek fashion, in which Fate should be the only real hero, that would have been another thing: then he must have retained the involuntary sin

of Arthur, his weakness, his impotence to escape from its consequences, as the central and dominant motive of the story. But his design was diametrically the opposite of this. He was writing in the modern spirit, which lays the emphasis not on Fate, but on Free-will. He meant to show that the soul of man is not bound in inextricable toils and foredoomed to hopeless struggle, but free to choose between good and evil, and that the issues of life, at least for the individual, depend upon the nature of that choice. It was for this reason that he made Arthur, as the ideal of the highest manhood, pure from the stains of ineradicable corruption, and showed him rising, moving onward, and at last passing out of sight, like a radiant star which accomplishes its course in light and beauty.

Mr. Swinburne has a right to find fault with Arthur's character as an ideal ; he has a right to say that there are serious defects in it, that it lacks virility, that it has a touch of insincerity about it, that it comes perilously near to self-complacency and moral priggishness. There may be a grain of truth in some of these criticisms. But to condemn the Idylls because they are not built upon

the lines of a Greek Tragedy is as superfluous and unjust as it would be to blame a pine-tree for not resembling an oak, or to despise a Gothic cathedral because it differs from a Doric temple.

It was legitimate, then, for Tennyson to select out of the mass of materials which Mallory had collected such portions as were adapted to form the outline of a consistent story, and to omit the rest as unnecessary and incapable of being brought into harmony with the design. But was it also legitimate for the poet to treat his subject in a manner and spirit so distinctly modern,—to make his characters discuss the problems and express the sentiments which belong to the nineteenth century?

It cannot be denied that he has done this. Not only are many of the questions of morality and philosophy which arise in the course of the Idylls, questions which were unknown to the Middle Ages, but the tone of some of the most suggestive and important speeches of Merlin, of Arthur, of Lancelot, of Tristram, is manifestly the tone of these latter days. Take for example Merlin's oracular triplets in *The Coming of Arthur*:

Rain, rain and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

We recognize here the accents of the modern philosopher who holds that all knowledge is relative and deals only with phenomena, the reality being unknowable. Or listen to Tristram as he argues with Isolt:

The vows ?

O ay — the wholesome madness of an hour.
. . . The wide world laughs at it.
And worldling of the world am I, and know
The ptarmigan that whitens ere his hour
Woos his own end; we are not angels here,
Nor shall be: vows — I am woodman of the woods
And hear the garnet-headed yaffingale
Mock them: my soul, we love but while we may;
And therefore is my love so large for thee,
Seeing it is not bounded save by love.

That is the modern doctrine of free love, not only in its conclusion, but in its argument drawn from the example of the birds, — the untimely ptarmigan that invites destruction, and the red-crested woodpecker that pursues its amours in the liberty of nature.

Or hear the speech which Arthur makes to his knights when they return from the quest of the Holy Grail: —

And some among you held, that if the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow:

Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind,
To whom a space of land is given to plough,
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done.

That is the modern conception of kingship, the idea of responsibility as superior to authority. Public office is a public trust. The discharge of duty to one's fellow-men, the work of resisting violence and maintaining order and righting the wrongs of the oppressed, is higher and holier than the following of visions. The service of man is the best worship of God. It was not thus that kings thought, it was not thus that warriors talked in the sixth century.

But has the poet any right to transfer the ideas and feelings of his own age to men and women who did not and could not entertain them, after this fashion? The answer to this question depends entirely upon the view which we take of the nature and purpose of poetry. If it is to give an exact historical account of certain events, then of course every modern touch in an ancient story, every reflection of the present into the past, is a blemish. But if the object of poetry is to bring out the meaning of human life, to quicken the dead bones of narrative

with a vital spirit, to show us character and action in such a way that our hearts shall be moved and purified by pity and fear, anger and love ; then certainly it is not only lawful but inevitable that the poet should throw into his work the thoughts and emotions of his own age. For these are the only ones that he has studied from the life.

There is a certain kind of realism which absolutely destroys reality in a work of art. It is the shabby realism of the French painter who took it for granted that the only way to paint a sea-beach with accuracy was to sprinkle the canvas with actual sand ; the shabby realism of M. Vereschagin, who gives us coloured photographs of Palestinian Jews as a representation of the life of Christ ; the shabby realism of the writers who are satisfied with reproducing the dialect, the dress, the manners of the time and country in which the scene of their story is laid, without caring whether their *dramatis personæ* have any human nature and life in them or not. Great pictures or great poems have never been produced in this way. They have always been full of anachronisms, — intellectual and moral anachronisms, I mean, — and their want of scientific accuracy is

the very condition of their poetic truth. Every poet of the first rank has idealized — or let us rather say, vitalized — his characters by giving to them the thoughts and feelings which he has himself experienced, or known by living contact with men and women of his own day. Homer did this with Ulysses, Virgil with Æneas, Shakspeare with Hamlet, Milton with Satan, Goethe with Faust. From the very beginning, the Arthurian legends have been treated in the same way. Poets and prose romancers have made them the mirror of their own chivalric ideals and aspirations. Compared with the Rolands and the Aliscans of the *chansons de geste*, Lancelot and Gawain and Percivale are modern gentlemen. And why? Not because the supposed age of Arthur was really better than the age of Charlemagne, but simply because Chrétien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach had higher and finer conceptions of knighthood and piety and courtesy and love, which they embodied in their heroes of the Round Table. No one imagines that the *Morte d'Arthur* in any of its forms is an exact reproduction of life and character in Britain in the time of the Saxon invasion. It is a

reflection of the later chivalry, — the chivalry of the Norman and Angevin kings. If the story could be used to convey the ideals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, why not also the ideals of the nineteenth century? If it be said that Arthur was not really a modern gentleman, it may be answered that it is just as certain that he was not a mediæval gentleman; perhaps he was not a gentleman at all. There was no more necessity that Tennyson should be true to Mallory, than there was that Mallory should be true to Walter Map or Robert de Borron. Each of them was a poet, a maker, a creator for his own age. The only condition upon which it was possible for Tennyson to make a poem about Arthur and his knights was that he should cast his own thoughts into the mould of the ancient legends, and make them represent living ideas and types of character. This he has done so successfully that the *Idylls* stand as the most representative poem of the present age.

III.

Two things are to be considered in a work of art: the style and the substance.

So far as the outward form of the *Idylls*

is concerned, they belong unquestionably in the very first rank of English verse. In music of rhythm, in beauty of diction, in richness of illustration, they are unsurpassed. Even Mr. Swinburne — himself a master of words — confesses a cordial admiration for their “exquisite magnificence of style.” The phrase is well chosen; for they combine in a rare way two qualities which seem irreconcilable, — delicacy and grandeur, the power of observing the most minute details and painting them with absolute truth of touch, and the power of clothing large thoughts in simple, vigorous, sweeping words. It would be an easy matter to give examples of the first of these qualities from every page of the *Idylls*. They are full of little pictures which show that Tennyson has studied Nature at first hand, and that he understands how to catch and reproduce the most fleeting and delicate expressions of her face. Take, for instance, some of his studies of trees. He has seen the ancient yew-tree tossed by the gusts of April, —

That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke, —
little clouds of dust rising from it, as if it
were on fire. He has noted the resemblance
between a crippled, shivering beggar and

An old dwarf-elm
That turns its back on the salt blast;

and the line describes exactly the stunted, suffering, patient aspect of a tree that grows beside the sea and is bent landward by the prevailing winds. He has felt the hush that broods upon the forest when a tempest is coming, —

And the dark wood grew darker toward the storm
In silence.

Not less exact is his knowledge of the birds that haunt the forests and the fields. He has seen the

Careful robins eye the delver's toil;
and listened to

The great plover's human whistle,
and marked at sunset, in the marshes, how

The lone hern forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and, stretching, dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool.

He knows, also, how the waters flow and fall in the streams; how a wild brook

Slopes o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it;

how, in a sharper rapid, there is a place

Where the crisping white
Plays ever back upon the sloping wave;

how one

That listens near a torrent mountain-brook
 All thro' the crash of the near cataract, hears
 The drumming thunder of the huger fall
 At distance.

Most wonderful of all is his knowledge of the sea, and his power to describe it. He has looked at it from every standpoint and caught every phase of its changing aspect. Take these four pictures. First, you stand upon the cliffs of Cornwall and watch the huge Atlantic billows, blue as sapphire and bright with sunlight, and you understand how Tristram could say,

O sweeter than all memories of thee,
 Deeper than any yearnings after thee,
 Seemed *these far-rolling, westward-smiling seas.*

Then, you lie upon the smooth level of some broad beach, on a summer afternoon,

*And watch the curled white of the coming wave
 Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks.*

Then, you go into a dark cavern like that of Staffa, and see the dumb billows rolling in, one after another, groping their way into the farthest recesses as if they were seeking to find something that they had lost, and you know how it was with Merlin when

So dark a forethought roll'd about his brain,
 As on a dull day in an ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
In silence.

Then, you stand on the deek of a vessel in a gale, — not on the blue Atlantie, but on the turbid German Ocean, — and you behold how

A wild wave in the wide North-sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
 Down on a bark, and overbears the bark
 And him that helms it.

I think it is safe to say that these four wave-pictures have never been surpassed, either in truth or in power, by any artist in words or colours.

But if it should be asserted that lines like these prove the fineness of Tennyson's art rather than the greatness of his poetry, the assertion might be granted, and still we should be able to support the larger claim by pointing to passages in the *Idylls* which are unquestionably magnifieent, — great not only in expression but great also in thought. There are single lines which have the felicity and force of epigrams :

Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.

He makes no friend who never made a foo.

Man dreams of fame while woman wakes to love.

A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.

Mockery is the fume of little hearts.

There are longer passages in which the very highest truths are uttered without effort, and in language so natural and inevitable that we have to look twice before we realize its grandeur. Take for example the description of human error in *Geraint and Enid*:

O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us even at this hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world,
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen.

Or take Arthur's speech to Lancelot in the *Holy Grail*:

Never yet
Could all of true and noble in knight and man
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
With such a closeness, but apart there grew
Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness :
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

Or, best of all, take that splendid description of Lancelot's disloyal loyalty to Guinevere, in *Elaine* : —

The shackles of an old love straitened him :
His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Shakspere himself has nothing more perfect than this. It is an admirable example of what has been called "the grand style,"— terse yet spacious, vigorous yet musical, clear yet suggestive; not a word too little or too much, and withal a sense of something larger and more mysterious in the thought, which words cannot fully reveal.

It would be superfluous to quote at length such a familiar passage as the parting of Arthur and Guinevere at Almesbury. But let any reader take this up and study it carefully; mark the fluency and strength of the verse; the absence of all sensationalism, and yet the thrill in the far-off sound of the solitary trumpet that blows while Guinevere lies in the dark at Arthur's feet; the purity and dignity of the imagery, the steady onward and upward movement of the thought, the absolute simplicity of the language as it is taken word by word, and yet the richness and splendour of the effect which it produces,— and if he is candid, I think he must admit that there is no other poet living who is master of such a grand style as this.

But of course the style alone does not make a masterpiece, nor will any number

of eloquent fragments redeem a poem from failure if it lacks the soul of greatness. The subject of it must belong to poetry ; that is to say, it must be adapted to move the feelings as well as to arouse the intellect, it must have the element of mystery as well as the element of clearness. Whether the form be lyric or epic, dramatic or idyllic, the poet must make us feel that he has something to say that is not only worth saying, but also fitted to give us pleasure through the quickening of the emotions. The central idea of the poem must be vital and creative ; it must have power to sustain itself in our minds while we read ; it must be worked out coherently and yet it must suggest that it belongs to a larger truth whose depths are unexplored and inaccessible. It seems to me that these are the conditions of a great poem. We have now to consider whether or not they are fulfilled in the *Idylls of the King*. In other words, it remains for us to turn from the criticism of their form to the study of their substance.

The meaning of the *Idylls* has been distinctly stated by the poet himself, and we are bound to take his words as the clue to their interpretation. In the “Dedication to the Queen” he says, —

Accept this old imperfect tale

New-old, and shadowing *Sense at war with Soul*,
Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain-peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still: or him
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's, one
Touched by the adulterous finger of a time
That hover'd between war and wantonness,
And crownings and dethronements.

This is a clear disavowal of an historical purpose in the Idylls. But does it amount to the confession that they are an allegory pure and simple? It is in this sense that the critics have commonly taken the statement. But I venture to think and to affirm that they are mistaken, and that the mistake has been a barrier to the thorough comprehension of the poem and a fertile source of errors and absurdities in some of the best essays which have been written about it.

Let us understand precisely what an allegory is. It is not merely a representation of one thing by another which resembles it in its properties or circumstances, a picture where the outward form conveys a hidden meaning, a story

“Where more is meant than meets the ear.”

It is a work in which the figures and characters are confessedly unreal, a masquerade

in which the actors are not men and women, but virtues and vices dressed up in human costume. The distinguishing mark of it is personification. It does not deal with actual persons but with abstract qualities which are treated as if they were persons, and made to speak and act as if they were alive. It moves, therefore, altogether in a dream-world: it is not only improbable but impossible; at a touch its figures dissolve into thin air. I will illustrate my meaning by examples. Dürer's picture of *Death and the Knight* has allegorical features in it, but it is not an allegory because the Knight is an actual man of flesh and blood, — or perhaps one ought to say (remembering that grim figure), of bone and nerve. *Melancolia*, on the contrary, is an allegory of the purest type. Goethe's *Faust* is not an allegory, although it is full of symbolism and contains a hidden meaning. Spenser's *Fairy Queen* is an allegory, because its characters are only attributes in disguise, and its plot is altogether arbitrary and artificial.

The defect of strict allegory is that it always disappoints us. A valiant knight comes riding in, and we prepare to follow his adventures with wonder and delight. Then

the poet informs us that it is not a knight at all, but only Courage or Temperance or Patience in armour, and straightway we lose our interest; we know exactly what he is going to do, and we care not what becomes of him. A fair damsel appears upon the scene, and we are ready to be moved to pity by her distress, and to love by her surpassing beauty, until presently we are reminded that it is not a damsel at all, but only Purity or Faith or Moral Disinterestedness, running about in woman's clothes; and forthwith we are disenchanted. There is no speculation in her eyes. Her hand is like a stuffed glove. She has no more power to stir our feelings than a proposition in Euclid. We would not shed a drop of blood to win her ghostly favour, or to rescue her from all the giants that ever lived. But if the method were reversed; if instead of a virtue representing a person, the poet gave us a person embodying and representing a virtue; if instead of the oppositions and attractions of abstract qualities, we had the trials and conflicts and loves of real men and women in whom these qualities were living and working,—then the poet might remind us as often as he pleased of the deeper significance of

his story; we should still be able to follow it with interest.

This is the point which I desire to make in regard to the *Idylls of the King*. It is a distinction which, so far I know, has never been clearly drawn. The poem is not an allegory, but a parable.

Of course there are a great many purely allegorical figures and passages in it. The Lady of the Lake, for example, is a personification of Religion. She dwells in a deep calm, far below the surface of the waters, and when they are tossed and troubled by storms,

Hath power to walk the water like our Lord.

She gives to the King his sword Excalibur, to represent either the spiritual weapon with which the soul wars against its enemies, or, as seems to me more probable, the temporal power of the church. For it bears the double inscription: —

On one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
'Take me,' but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourselves,
'Cast me away.' And sad was Arthur's face
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him
'Take then and strike!' the time to cast away
Is yet far-off. So this great brand the King
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down.

The necessity of actual flesh-and-blood warfare against the heathen is proclaimed in the ancient language; the uselessness of such weapons under the new order, in the modern conflict, is predicted in the language of to-day.

The Lady of the Lake is described as standing on the keystone of the gate of Camelot: —

All her dress
Wept from her sides, as water flowing away :
But, like the cross, her great and goodly arms
Stretch'd under all the cornice, and upheld :
And drops of water fell from either hand :
And down from one a sword was hung, from one
A censer, either worn with wind and storm ;
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish ;
. and over all,
High on the top, were those three Queens, the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need.

This is a picture of the power of religion in sustaining the fabric of society. The forms of the church are forever changing and flowing like water, but her great arms are stretched out immovable, like the cross. The sword is the symbol of her justice, the censer is the symbol of her adoration, and both bear the marks of time and strife. The drops that fall from her hands are the water of baptism, and the fish is the ancient sign of the name of Christ.

- ✓ The three Queens who sit up aloft are the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

It is a fine piece of work from the mystical standpoint; elaborate, spiritual, suggestive, and full of true philosophy; Ambrogio Lorenzetti might have painted it. But after all, it has little or nothing to do with the substance of the poem. The watery Lady stands like a painted figure on the wall, and the three Queens play no real part in the life of Arthur. Apparently they continue to sit upon the cornice in ornamental idleness while the King loves and toils and fights and "drees his weird"; and we are almost surprised at their unwonted activity when they appear at last in the black barge and carry him away to the island-valley of Avilion.

There is another passage of the same character in *The Holy Grail*, which describes the temptations of Percivale. He is allured from his quest, first by appetite under the figure of an orchard full of pleasant fruits, then by domestic love under the figure of a fair woman spinning at a cottage door, then by wealth under the figure of a knight clad in gold and jewels, then by fame under the

figure of a mighty city filled with shouts of welcome and applause ; but all these are only visions, and when they vanish at Percivale's approach we cannot feel that there was any reality in his trials, or that he deserves any great credit for resisting them.

The most distinct example of this kind of work is found in *Gareth and Lynette*, in the description of the carving on the rock. There are five figures of armed men, Phosphorus, Meridies, Hesperus, Nox, and Mors, all chasing the human soul,

A shape that fled
With broken wings, torn raiment and loose hair,
For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.

This is definitely called an allegory, and its significance is explained as

The war of Time against the soul of man.

But there is all the difference in the world between these graven images and the brave boy Gareth riding through the forest with the bright, petulant, audacious maiden Lynette. If the former are properly called allegorical, the latter must certainly be described by some other adjective. Gareth is alive,—very much alive indeed, in his ambition to become a knight, in his quarrel with Sir Kay the crabbed seneschal, in his

sturdy courtship of the damsel with “the cheek of apple-blossom,” in his conflict with the four caitiffs who kept Lyonors shut up in her castle. We follow his adventures with such interest that we are fairly vexed with the poet for refusing to tell us at the end whether this cheerful companion and good fighter married Lynette or her elder sister.

We must distinguish, then, between the allegorical fragments which Tennyson has woven into his work and the substance of the *Idylls*; between the scenery and mechanical appliances and the actors who move upon the stage. The attempt to interpret the poem as a strict allegory breaks down at once and spoils the story. Suppose you say that Arthur is the Conscience, and Guinevere is the Flesh, and Merlin is the Intellect; then pray what is Lancelot, and what is Geraint, and what is Vivien? What business has the Consciencee to fall in love with the Flesh? What attraction has Vivien for the Intellect without any passions? If Merlin is not a man, “*Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*” The whole affair becomes absurd, unreal, incomprehensible, uninteresting.

But when we take the King and his people as actual men and women, when we throw ourselves into the story and let it carry us along, then we understand that it is a parable ; that is to say, it “throws beside” itself an image, a reflection, of something spiritual, just as a man walking in the sunlight is followed by his shadow. It is a tale of human life, and therefore, being told with a purpose, it

Shadows Sense at war with Soul.

Now take up this idea of the conflict between sense and soul and carry it out through the Idylls.

Arthur is intended to be a man in whom the spirit has already conquered and reigns supreme. It is upon this that his kingship rests. His task is to bring his realm into harmony with himself, to build up a spiritual and social order upon which his own character, as the best and highest, shall be impressed. In other words, he works for the uplifting and purification of humanity. It is the problem of civilization. His great enemies in this task are not outward and visible, — the heathen, — for these he overcomes and expels. But the real foes that oppose him to the end are the evil passions

in the hearts of men and women about him. So long as these exist and dominate human lives, the dream of a perfected society must remain unrealized ; and when they get the upper hand, even its beginnings will be destroyed. But the conflict is not an airy, abstract strife ; it lies in the opposition between those in whom the sensual principle is regnant and those in whom the spiritual principle is regnant, and in the inward struggle of the noble heart against the evil, and of the sinful heart against the good.

This contest may be traced through its different phases in the successive stories which make up the poem.

In *The Coming of Arthur*, doubt, which judges by the senses, is matched against faith, which follows the spirit. The question is whether Arthur is a pretender and the child of shamefulness, or the true King. Against him stand the base-minded lords and barons who are ready to accept any evil story of his origin rather than accept him as their ruler. For him stand such knights as Bedivere, —

For bold in heart and act and word was he
Whenever slander breathed against the King.

Between the two classes stands Leodogran,

the father of Guinevere, uncertain whether to believe or doubt. The arguments of the clever Queen Bellicent do not convince him. But at last he has a dream in which he sees the King standing out in heaven, crowned, — and faith conquers. Guinevere is given to Arthur as his wife. His throne is securely established, and his reign begins prosperously.

Then comes *Gareth and Lynette*. Here the conflict is between a true ambition and a false pride. Gareth is an honest, ardent fellow who longs for "good fame and renommee." He wishes to rise in the world, but he is willing to work and fight his way upward; yes, even to serve as a kitchen-knave if so he may win his spurs at last and ride among the noble knights of the Round Table. His conception of nobility grasps the essence of it without caring much for the outward form. Lynette is a society girl, a worshipper of rank and station; brave, high-spirited, lovable, but narrow-minded, and scornful of every one who lacks the visible marks of distinction. She judges by the senses. She cannot imagine that a man who comes from among the lower classes can possibly be a knight, and despises Gareth's

proffered services. But his pride, being true, is stronger than hers, being false. He will not be rebuffed ; follows her, fights her battles, wins first her admiration, then her love, and brings her at last to see that true knighthood lies not in the name but in the deed.

The atmosphere of this Idyll is altogether pure and clear. There is as yet no shadow of the storm that is coming to disturb Arthur's realm. The chivalry of the spirit overcomes the chivalry of the sense in a natural, straightforward, joyous way, and all goes well with the world.

But in *Geraint and Enid* there is a cloud upon the sky, a trouble in the air. The fatal love of Lancelot and Guinevere has already begun to poison the court with suspicions and scandals. It is in this brooding and electrical atmosphere that jealousy, in the person of Geraint, comes into conflict with loyalty, in the person of Enid. The story is the same that Boccaccio has told so exquisitely in the tale of *Griselda*, and Shakspere so tragically in *Othello*, — the story of a woman, sweet and true and steadfast down to the very bottom of her heart, joined to a man who is exacting and suspicious. Geraint wakens in the morning to find his

wife weeping, and leaps at once to the conclusion that she is false. He judges by the sense and not by the soul. But Enid loves him too well even to defend herself against him. She obeys his harsh commands and submits to his heavy, stupid tests. Yet even in her obedience she distinguishes between the sense and the spirit. As long as there is no danger she rides before him in silence as he told her to do ; but when she sees the robbers waiting in ambush she turns back to warn him : —

I needs must disobey him for his good :
How should I dare obey him for his harm ?
Needs must I speak ; and tho' he kill me for it,
I save a life dearer to me than mine.

So they ride onward through many perils and adventures, she like a bright, clear, steady star, he like a dull, smouldering, smoky fire, until at last her loyalty conquers his jealousy, and he sees that it is better to trust than to doubt, and that a pure woman's love has the power to vindicate its own honour against the world, and the right to claim an absolute and unquestioning confidence. The soul is once more victorious over the sense.

In *Balin and Balan* the cloud has grown larger and darker, the hostile influences in

the realm begin to make themselves more deeply felt. The tribntary court of Pell-lam, in which the hypocritical old king has taken to holy things in rivalry of Arthur,

And finds himself descended from the Saint
Arimathean Joseph,

and collects sacred reliques, and drives out all women from his palace lest he should be polluted, while his son and heir, Garlon, is a secret libertine and murderer, — is a picture of religion corrupted by asceticism. Balin and Balan are two brothers, alike in daring, in strength, in simplicity, but differing in this: Balin is called “the savage,” swift in impulse, fierce in anger, unable to restrain or guide himself; Balan is master of his passion, clear-hearted and self-controlled, his brother’s better angel. Both men represent force; but one is force under dominion of soul, the other is force under dominion of sense. By the falsehood of Vivien, who now appears on the scene, they are involved in conflict and ignorantly give each other mortal wounds. It would seem as if violence had conquered. And yet, in truth not so. Balin’s last words are —

Goodnight! for we shall never bid again
Goodmorrow. Dark my doom was here, and dark
It will be there.

But Balan replies with a diviner faith, drawing his brother upward in death even as he had done in life, —

Goodnight, true brother here! goodmorrow there!

Thus far the higher principle has been victorious, though in the last instance the victory is won only in the moment of an apparent defeat. But now, in *Merlin and Vivien*, sense becomes the victor. The old magician is a man in whom the intellect appears to be supreme. One might think him almost impregnable to temptation. But the lissome snake Vivien, also a type of keen and subtle intelligence, though without learning, finds the weak point in his armour, overcomes him and degrades him to her helpless thrall.

The conflict in *Lancelot and Elaine* is between a pure, virgin love and a guilty passion. The maid of Astolat is the lily of womanhood. The Queen is the rose, full-blown and heavy with fragrance. Never has a stronger contrast been drawn than this: Elaine in her innocent simplicity and singleness of heart; Guinevere in her opulence of charms, her intensity, her jealous devotion. Between the two stands the great Sir Lancelot, a noble heart though erring.

If he were free he would turn to the pure love. But he is not free; he is bound by ties which are interwoven with all that seems most precious in his life. He cannot break them if he would. And so the guilty passion conquers and he turns back to the fatal sweetness of his old allegiance.

The Holy Grail shows us the strife between superstition, which is a sensual religion, and true faith, which is spiritual. This is in some respects the richest and most splendid of the *Idylls*, but it is also, by reason of its theme, the most confused. Out of the mystical twilight which envelops the action this truth emerges: that those knights who thought of the Grail only as an external wonder, a miracle which they fain would see because others had seen it, "followed wandering fires"; while those to whom it became a symbol of inward purity and grace, like Galahad and Percivale and even the dull, honest, simple-minded Bors and the sin-tormented Lancelot, finally attained unto the vision. But the King, who remained at home and kept the plain path of daily duty, is the real hero of the Idyll, though he bore no part in the quest.

In *Pelleas and Ettarre* the victory falls

back to the side of sense. Pelcas is the twin-brother of Elaine, a fair soul who has no thought of evil. Amid the increasing darkness of the court he sees nothing but light. He dreams that the old ideals of chivalry are still unbroken; to him all ladies are perfect, and all knights loyal. He is in love with loving,—*amans amare*, as St. Augustine put it,—and when Ettarre crosses his track he worships her as a star. But she—“of the earth, earthly”—despises him as a child, mocks him, and casts him off. Gawain, the flower of courtesy, betrays him basely. Driven mad by scorn and treason, he rushes away at last into the gloom,—a gallant bark wrecked by the perfidy of a wicked world.

✓ The fool is the hero of *The Last Tournament*. He knows that Arthur's dream will never be fulfilled, knows that the Queen is false, and the Knights are plotting treason, and the whole realm is on the verge of ruin; but still he holds fast to his master, and believes in him, and will not break his allegiance to follow the downward path of the court. Arthur has lifted him out of the baseness of his old life and made him a man. Maimed wits and crippled body, yet he has

a soul, — this little, loyal jester, — and he will not lose it.

I have had my day and my philosophies, —
And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's fool.

In sharpest contrast to him stands Sir Tristram, the most brilliant and powerful of the new knights who followed the King only for glory, and despised him in their hearts, and broke his vows as if they had never sworn them. Poet, musician, huntsman, warrior, perfect in face and form, victor in love and war, Tristram is one to whom faith is foolishness and the higher life an idle delusion. He denies his soul, mocks at it, flings it away from him.

New leaf, new life, the days of frost are o'er :
New life, new love to suit the newer day ;
New loves are sweet as those that went before ;
Free love — free field — we love but while we may.

In him the triumph of the senses is complete. He wins the prize in the “Tournament of the Dead Innocence,” and the shouts of the people hail him as their favourite. He clasps the jewels around the neck of Isolt as she sits with him in her tower of Tintagil by the sea, lightly glorying in his conquests. But out of the darkness the battle-axe of the craven King Mark

strikes him dead, and his star vanishes. Meanwhile, at Camelot, Arthur comes home ; Guinevere has fled ; —

And while he climb'd,
All in a death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom,
The stairway to the hall, and look'd and saw
The great Queen's bower was dark, — about his feet
A voice clung sobbing till he question'd it,
'What art thou ?' and the voice about his feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again.'

Yes, a fool, but also a soul, and faithful even unto death, and therefore shining steadfastly like a star in heaven when the false meteor of sense has dropt into endless night.

The next Idyll should be called *Arthur and Guinevere*. The conflict now draws to its sharpest issue. It lies between these two : one the victim of a great sin, a crime of sense which chose the lower rather than the higher love ; the other the hero of a great faith, which knows that pardon follows penitence, and seeks to find some light of hope for the fallen. Is Guinevere to be separated from Arthur forever ? — that is the question whose answer hangs upon the close of this struggle. And the Queen herself tells us the result, when she says, —

Ah great and gentle lord,
 Who wast as is the conscience of a saint
 Among his warring senses to thy knights, —
 . . . Now I see thee what thou art,
 Thou art the highest and most human too,
 Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
 Will tell the King I love him tho' so late ?
 Now — ere he goes to that great Battle ? none :
 Myself must tell him in that purer life,
 But now it were too daring.

In *The Passing of Arthur* we have a picture of the brave man facing death. All the imagery of the poem is dark and shadowy. The great battle has been fought ; the Round Table has been shattered ; the bodies of the slain lie upon the field, friends and foes mingled together, and not a voice to stir the silence.

Only the wan wave
 Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
 Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
 Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
 And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,
 And rolling far along the gloomy shores
 The voice of days of old and days to be.

This is the tide of Time which engulfs all things mortal. Arthur's hour has come : he has lived his life and must pass away. To Sir Bedivere, valiant, simple-hearted knight, but still unable to look beyond the outward appearance of death, this seems a fatal end.

of all his hopes. He cannot bear to cast away his master's sword, but would fain keep it as a relic. He cries,—

Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead;

But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.

But the soul of Arthur is stronger, clearer-sighted. In this last conflict with the senses he is victorious. He answers Bedivere, with heroic confidence, that death does not end all.

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

He believes that by prayer

the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

He enters fearlessly upon the mysterious voyage into the future. And as the barge floats with him out of sight, from beyond the light of the horizon there come

Sounds as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thus the conflict is ended, and the victor-soul enters its rest.

What shall we say now of this picture of life which Tennyson has given us in his greatest poem? Is it true? Does it grasp the facts and draw from them their real lesson?

First of all, I think we must admit that there is a serious defect in the very place where it is most to be regretted,—in the character of Arthur. He is too perfect for perfection. Tennyson either meant to paint a man who never had any conflict with himself, which is impossible; or he intended to exhibit a man in whom the conflict had been fought out, in which case Arthur surely would have borne some of the scars of contest, shown some sense of personal imperfection, manifested a deeper feeling of comprehension and compassion for others in their temptations. But he appears to regard his own character and conduct as absolutely flawless. Even in that glorious parting interview with Guinevere — one of the most superb passages in all literature — his bearing verges perilously on Pharisaic self-complacency. He shows no consciousness of any fault on his own part. He acts and

speaks as if he were far above reproach. But was that possible? Was it true? Could such a catastrophe have come without blame on both sides? Guinevere was but a girl when she left her father's court. It was natural—yes, and it was right—that she should desire warmth and colour in her life. She rode among the flowers in May with Lancelot. Is it any wonder that she found delight in the journey? She was married to the solemn King before the stateliest of Britain's altar-shrines with pompous ceremonies. Is it any wonder that she was oppressed and made her vows with drooping eyes? And then, at once, the King began his state-banquets and negotiations with the Roman ambassadors. He was absorbed in the affairs of his kingdom. He left the young Queen to herself,—and to Lancelot. He seemed to be “dreaming of fame while woman woke to love.” Is it strange that she thought him cold, neglectful, irresponsible, and said to herself, “He cares not for me”? Is it to be marvelled at that she found an outlet for her glowing, passionate heart in her companionship with Lancelot? Perhaps Arthur's conduct was inevitable for one immersed as he was in the

cares of state ; perhaps he was unconscious that he was exposing his wife, defenceless and alone, to a peril from which he only could have protected her ; but when at last the consequence was discovered, he was bound to confess that he had a share in the transgression and the guilt. It is the want of this note that mars the harmony of his parting speech. A little more humanity would have compensated for a little less piety. Had Arthur been a truer husband, Guinevere might have been a more faithful wife. The excess of virtue is a vice. The person who feels no consciousness of sin must be either more or less than man. This is the worst defect of the *Idylls*, — that the central character comes so near to being

Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null.

But this defect is outweighed and cancelled by the fact that the poem, after all, does recognize, and bring out in luminous splendour, the great truths of human life.

The first of these truths is that Sin is the cause of disorder and misery, and until it is extirpated the perfect society cannot be securely established. And by sin Tennyson does not mean the desire of existence, but the transgression of law. The right to live

— the right to desire to live — is not denied for a moment. It is in fact distinctly asserted, and the idea of the immortality of the soul underlies the whole poem. But life must be according to righteousness, if it is to be harmonious and happy; and righteousness consists in conformity to law. Love is the motive force of the poem. The King himself acknowledges its dominion, and says, —

For saving I be join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself, in mine own realm,
Victor and lord.

But love also must move within the bounds of law, must be true to its vows. Not even the strongest and most beautiful soul may follow the guidance of passion without restraint; for the greater the genius, the beauty, the power, of those who transgress, the more fatal will be the influence of their sin upon other lives.

This indeed is the lesson of the fall of Lancelot and Guinevere. It was because they stood so high, because they were so glorious in their manhood and womanhood, that their example had power to infect the

court. Sin is the principle of disintegration and death. It is this that corrupts societies, and brings about the decline and fall of nations ; and so long as sin dwells in the heart of man all efforts to create a perfect state, or even to establish an order like the Round Table in self-perpetuating security, must fail. The redemption and purification of the earth is a long task, beyond human strength ; as Tennyson has said in *Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After*, —

Ere she reach her heavenly-best a God must mingle with the game.

But side by side with this truth, and in perfect harmony with it, Tennyson teaches that the soul of man has power to resist and conquer sin within its own domain, to triumph over sense by steadfast loyalty to the higher nature, and thus to achieve peace and final glory. When I say he teaches this, I do not mean that he sets it forth in any formal way as a doctrine. I mean that he shows it in the life of Arthur as a fact. The King chooses his ideal, and follows it, and it lifts him up and sets him on his course like a star. His life is not a failure, as it has been called, but a glorious success, for it demonstrates the freedom of the

will and the strength of the soul, against the powers of evil and the fate of sin. Its motto might be taken from that same poem from which we have just quoted, — a poem which was foolishly interpreted at first as an avowal of pessimism, but which is in fact a splendid assertion of meliorism, —

Follow you the star that lights a desert pathway yours
or mine,

Follow till you see the highest human nature is Divine;

Follow light and do the right, — for man can half con-
trol his doom, —

Follow till you see the deathless angel seated in the
vacant tomb!

Finally, the *Idylls* bring out the profound truth that there is a vicarious element in human life, and that no man liveth to himself alone. The characters are individualized but they are not isolated. They are parts of a vast organism, all bound together, all influencing each other. The victory of sense over soul is not a solitary triumph; it has far-reaching results. The evil lives of Modred, of Vivien, of Tristram, spread like a poison through the court. But no less fruitful, no less far-reaching, is the victory of soul over sense. Gareth, and Enid, and Balan, and Bors, and Bedivere, and Gal-

had, have power to help and uplift others out of the lower life. Their lives are not wasted: nor does Arthur himself live in vain, though his Round Table is dissolved: for he is “joined to her that is the fairest under heaven,” not for a time only, but forever. His ^{loving} faith triumphs over her sin. Guinevere is not lost; she is redeemed by his love. From the darkness of the convent at Almesbury, where she lies weeping in the dust, we hear a voice like that which thrills through the prison of Marguerite in *Faust*. The fiend mutters, *Sie ist gerichtet!* But the angel cries, *Sie ist gerettet!*

THE HISTORIC TRILOGY.

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THE appearance of Tennyson, in 1875, as a dramatic poet was a surprise. It is true that he had already shown that his genius was versatile and disposed to explore new methods of expression. True, also, that from the year 1842 a strong dramatic tendency had been manifest in his works. *Ulysses*, *St. Simeon Stylites*, *Love and Duty*, *Locksley Hall*, *Lucretius*, *The Northern Farmer*, *The Grandmother*, different as they are in style, are all essentially dramatic monologues. *Maud* is rightly entitled, in the late editions, *a Monodrama*. *The Princess* has been put upon the amateur stage in very pretty fashion; and the success of Mr. George Parsons Lathrop's fine acting version of *Elaine* proved not only his own ability, but also the high dramatic quality of that splendid Idyll.

But not even these hints that Tennyson had a creative impulse not yet fully satisfied were clear enough to prepare the world for his attempt to conquer another form of art.

He was acknowledged as a consummate master of lyric and idyllic poetry. People were not ready to see him come out in the seventh decade of his life in a new character, and take the stage as a dramatist. It seemed like a rash attempt to become the rival of his own fame.

The first feeling of the public at the production of *Queen Mary* was undisguised astonishment. And with this a good deal of displeasure was mingled. For the public, after all, is not fond of surprises. Having formed its opinion of a great man, and labelled him once for all as a sweet singer, or a sound moralist, or a brilliant word-painter, or an interesting story-teller, it loves not to consider him in any other light. It is confused and puzzled. The commonplaces of easy criticism become unavailable for further use. People shrink from the effort which is required for a new and candid judgment ; and so they fall back upon stale and unreasonable comparisons. They say, “Why does the excellent cobbler go beyond his last ? The old songs were admirable. Why does not the poet give us more of them, instead of trying us with a new play ?”

Thus it came to pass that *Queen Mary* was received with general dissatisfaction; respectful, of course, because it was the work of a famous man; but upon the whole the public was largely indifferent, and said in a tone of polite authority that it was not nearly so powerful as *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, nor so melodious even as *Œnone* and *The Lotos-Eaters*. A like fate befell *Harold* in 1877, except that a few critics began to feel the scruples of literary conscience, and made an honest effort to judge the drama on its own merits.

The Falcon, a play founded upon Boccaccio's well-known story, was produced in 1879, and the accomplished Mrs. Kendal, as the heroine, made it at least a partial success. In 1881 *The Cup*, a dramatization of an incident narrated in Plutarch's treatise *De Claris Mulieribus*, was brought out at the Lyceum with Mr. Henry Irving and Miss Ellen Terry in the principal rôles. It received hearty and general applause, and was by far the most popular of Tennyson's dramas. But its effect upon his fame as a playwright was more than counterbalanced by the grievous failure of *The Promise of May* in 1882. This piece was intended to

be an exposure of the pernicious influences of modern secularism. It was upon the whole a most dismal bit of work; and not even the eccentric conduct of the infidel Marquis of Queensbury, who rose from his seat at one of the performances and violently protested against the play as a libel upon the free-thinkers of England, availed to give it more than a momentary notoriety. At the close of the year 1884 Tennyson published the longest and most ambitious of his dramas, *Becket*, with a distinct avowal that it was "not intended in its present form to meet the exigencies of the modern stage."

The wisdom of this limitation is evident. We may even regret that the poet did not recognize it earlier. The difficulty of understanding and fulfilling the strict conditions of successful work for the stage, ancient or modern, is so great to a man whose habits of thought and expression have already been formed in a freer sphere of work, that it can be overcome, if at all, only at a cost too great to make the victory profitable. The *succès d'estime* of *The Cup* and *The Falcon* hardly repaid the effort. But setting aside these two plays, and forgetting the unhappy *Promise of May*, we may consider

Queen Mary, *Harold*, and *Becket*, from another point of view, as dramas not for acting, but for reading.

It seems to me that this consideration is a debt of honour which we owe to the poet. These tragedies are not to be dismissed as the mistakes and follies of an over-confident and fatally fluent genius. A poet like Tennyson does not make three such mistakes in succession. They are not the idle recreations of one who has finished his life-work and retired. They are not the feeble and mechanical productions of a man in his dotage. On the contrary, they are full of fire and force; and if they err at all it is on the side of exuberance. Their intensity of passion and overflow of feeling make them sometimes turbulent and harsh and incoherent. They would do more if they attempted less. And yet in spite of their occasional overloading and confusion they have a clear and strong purpose which makes them worthy of careful study. The judgment of a critic so intelligent as George Eliot is not to be disregarded, and she has expressed her opinion that “Tennyson’s plays run Shakspere’s close.”

The point of view from which they must

be regarded is that of historical tragedy. By this I mean a tragedy which involves not only individuals, but political parties and warring classes of society. Its object is to trace the fate of individuals as it affects the fate of nations ; to exhibit the conflict of opposing characters not for themselves alone, but as the exponents of those great popular forces and movements which play beneath the surface ; to throw the vivid colours of life into the black and white outlines on the screen of history and show that the figures are not mere shadows but human beings of like passions with ourselves.

Tennyson's dramatic trilogy is a picture of the Making of England. The three periods of action are chosen with the design of touching the most critical points of the long struggle. The three plots are so developed as to bring into prominence the vital issues of the strife. And the different characters, almost without exception, are exhibited as the representatives of the different races and classes and faiths which were contending for supremacy. Let us take up the plays in their historical order.

In *Harold* we see the close of that fierce triangular duel between the Saxons, the

Danes, and the Normans, which resulted in the Norman conquest and the binding of England, still Saxon at heart, to the civilization of the Continent. The crisis of the drama is the second scene of the second act, where Harold, a prisoner in the Palace of Bayeux, is cajoled and threatened and deceived by William to swear an oath to help him to the crown of England. The fierce subtlety of the Norman is matched against the heroic simplicity and frankness of the Saxon. Craft triumphs. Harold discovers that he has sworn, not merely by the jewel of St. Pancratius, on which his hand was laid, but by the sacred bones of all the saints concealed beneath it,—an oath which admits of no evasion, the breaking of which afterwards breaks his faith in himself and makes him fight the battle of Senlac as a man foredoomed to death. Both William and Harold are superstitious. But William's superstition is of a kind which enables him to use religion as his tool; Harold's goes only far enough to weaken his heart and make him tremble before the monk even while he defies him. Harold is the better man; William is the wiser ruler. His words over the body of his fallen rival on the battlefield

are prophetic of the result of the Norman conquest: —

Since I knew battle,
And that was from my boyhood, never yet —
No, by the splendour of God — have I fought men
Like Harold and his brethren and his guard
Of English. Every man about his king
Fell where he stood. They loved him: and pray God!]
My Normans may but move as true with me
To the door of death. Of one self-stock at first,
Make them again one people — Norman, English;
And English, Norman; — we should have a hand
To grasp the world with, and a foot to stamp it . . .
Flat. Praise the Saints. It is over. No more blood!
I am king of England, so they thwart me not,
And I will rule according to their laws.

It is worth while to remember, in this connection, that Tennyson himself is of Norman descent. Yet surely there never was a man more thoroughly English than he.

In *Becket* we are made spectators of a conflict less familiar, but more interesting and important, — the conflict between the church and the crown, between the ecclesiastical and the royal prerogatives, which shook England to the centre for many years, and out of the issues of which her present constitution has grown.

In this conflict the Papacy played a much smaller part than we usually imagine; and

religion, until the closing scenes, played practically no part at all. It was in fact a struggle for supreme authority in temporal affairs. First the king was contending against the nobility, and the church took sides with the king. Then the king attempted to subjugate the people, and the church, having become profoundly English, took sides with the people. Then the nobles combined against the king, and the church took sides with the nobles. Then the king revolted from the foreign domination of the church, and the people took sides with the king. Then the king endeavoured to use the church to crush the people, and the people under Cromwell rose against church and king and broke the double yoke. Then the people brought back the king, and he tried to reinstate the church as an instrument of royal absolutism. But the day for that was past. After another struggle, prolonged and bitter, but in the main bloodless, the English church lost almost the last vestige of temporal authority, and the English kingdom became simply "a crowned republic."

Now the point at which *Becket* touches this long conflict is the second stage. King Henry II., Count of Anjou, surnamed

“Plantagenet,” owed his throne to the church. It was the influence of the English bishops, especially of Theobald, Anselm’s great successor in the See of Canterbury, which secured Henry’s succession to the crown of his uncle and enemy, King Stephen. But the wild, wicked blood of Anjou was too strong in Henry for him to remain faithful to such an alliance. He was a thoroughly irreligious man: not only dissolute in life and cruel in temper, but also destitute of the sense of reverence, which sometimes exists even in immoral men. He spent his time at church in looking at picture-books and whispering with his friends. He despised and neglected the confessional. He broke out, in his passionate fits, with the wildest imprecations against God. The fellowship of the church was distasteful to him; and even the bond of gratitude to so good a man as Archbishop Theobald was too irksome to be borne.

Moreover he had gotten from the church all that he wanted. He was now the most mighty monarch in Christendom. His foot was on the neck of the nobles. The royal power had broken down the feudal, and stood face to face with the ecclesiastical, as

its only rival. The English Church, whose prerogative made her in effect the supreme judge and ruler over all the educated classes (that is to say over all who could read and write and were thus entitled to claim "the benefit of the clergy"), was the only barrier in Henry's path to an unlimited monarchy. He resolved that this obstacle must be removed. He would brook no rivalry in England, not even in the name of God. And therefore he thrust his bosom-friend, his boon-companion, his splendid chancellor, Thomas Becket, into the Archbishopric of Canterbury, hoping to find in him a willing and skilful ally in the subjugation of the church to the throne. Becket's rebellion and Henry's wrath form the plot of Tennyson's longest and greatest drama.

The character of Becket is one of the standing riddles of history. He compels our admiration by his strength, his audacity, his success in everything that he undertook. He is one of those men who are so intensely virile that they remain alive after they are dead: we cannot be indifferent to him: we are for him or against him. At the same time he perplexes us and stimulates our wonder to the highest pitch by the consistent

inconsistencies and harmonious contradictions of his character. The son of an obscure London merchant; the proudest and most accomplished of England's chivalrous youth; a student of theology in the University of Paris; the favourite pupil of the good Archbishop Theobald; the boon-companion of the riotous King Henry; a skilful diplomatist; the best horseman and boldest knight of the court; the hatred of the nobles, and the delight of the peasantry; the most lavish and luxurious, the most chaste and laborious, of English grandees; the most devout and ascetic, the most ambitious and the least selfish, of English bishops; as unwearied in lashing his own back with the scourge as he had been in smiting his country's enemies with the sword; as much at home in sack-cloth as in purple and fine linen; the prince of dandies and of devotees; the king's most faithful servant and most daring rival, most darling friend and most relentless foe,—what was this Becket? hero or villain? martyr or criminal? true man or traitor? worldling or saint?

Tennyson gives us the key to the riddle in the opening scene of the drama. The King and Becket are playing at chess. The King's

fancy is wandering ; he is thinking and talking of a hundred different things. But Becket is intent upon the game ; he cannot bear to do anything which he does not do well ; he pushes steadily forward and wins.

I think this scene gives us the secret of Becket's personality. An eager desire to be perfect in whatever part he played, an impulse to lead and conquer in every sphere that he entered,—this was what Henry failed to understand. He did not see that in transforming this intense and absolute man from a chancellor into an archbishop, he was thrusting him into a new part in which his passion for thoroughness would make him live up to all its requirements and become the most inflexible defender of the church against the encroachment of the throne.

But Becket understood himself and fore-saw the conflict into which the King's plan would plunge him. He knew that for him a change of relations meant a change of character. He resisted the promotion. Tennyson depicts most graphically the struggle in his mind. When Henry first broaches the subject, Becket answers :

Mock me not. I am not even a monk.
Thy jest — no more! Why, look, is this a sleeve
For an archbishop?

But Henry lays his hand on the richly embroidered garment, and says:

But the arm within
Is Becket's who hath beaten down my foes.
I lack a spiritual soldier, Thomas,
A man of this world and the next to boot.

Now this is just what Thomas can never be. To either world he can belong, but not to both. He can change, but he cannot compromise. While he is the defender of the throne he is serviceable and devoted to the King; when he becomes the leader of the Church he will be equally absorbed in her service.

The drama exhibits this strange transformation and its consequences. Forced by the urgency of the headstrong King, and persuaded by a message from the death-bed of his former friend and master Theobald, Becket yields at last and accepts the mitre. From this moment he is another man. With all his doubts as to his fitness for the sacred office, he has now given himself up to it, heart and soul. The tremendous mediæval idea of the Catholic Church as the visible kingdom of God upon earth takes possession

of him. He sees also that the issue of the political conflict in England depends upon the church, which is the people's "tower of strength, their bulwark against Throne and Baronage." He feels that he is called to be the champion of the cause of God and the people.

I am the man.

And yet I seem appall'd, — on such a sudden
At such an eagle height I stand, and see
The rift that runs between me and the king.
I serv'd our Theobald well when I was with him;
I serv'd King Henry well when I was Chancellor;
I am his no more, and I must serve the church.
And all my doubts I fling from me like dust,
Winnow and scatter all scruples to the wind,
And all the puissance of the warrior,
And all the wisdom of the Chancellor,
And all the heap'd experiences of life,
I cast upon the side of Canterbury, —
Our holy mother Canterbury, who sits
With tatter'd robes.

Here

I gash myself asunder from the king,
Though leaving each a wound: mine own, a grief
To show the scar forever — his, a hate
Not ever to be healed.

Both of these predictions are fulfilled: and herein lies the interest of the drama. All through the conflict between the monarch and the prelate, Becket's inflexible resist-

ance to the royal commands is maintained only at the cost of a perpetual struggle with his great personal love for Henry, and Henry's resolve to conquer the stubborn archbishop is inflamed and embittered by the thought that Becket was once his dearest comrade. It is a tragic situation. Tennyson has never shown a deeper insight into human nature, than by making this single combat between divided friends the turning-point of his drama.

The tragedy is enhanced by the introduction of Rosamund de Clifford — the King's

One sweet rose of the world.

Her beauty, her innocence, the childlike confidence of her affection for the fierce monarch, who is gentle only with her and whom she loves as her true husband, her songs and merry games with her little boy in the hidden bower, fall like gleams of summer sunlight into the stormy gloom of the play.

Becket becomes her guardian and protector against the cruel, murderous jealousy of Queen Eleanor. A most perilous position: a priest charged by the King whom he is resisting with the duty of defending and guarding the loveliest of women, and keeping her safe and secret for a master whom he cannot

but condemn. What a conflict of duty and desire, of conscience and loyalty, of passion and friendship! How did Becket meet it? Did he love Rosamund? Would he have loved her if he had not been bound by straiter vows? Was there anything of disloyalty in his persuading her to flee from her bower and take refuge with the nuns at Godstow? Tennyson thinks not. He paints his hero as a man true to his duty even in this sharpest trial; upright, steadfast, fearless, seeking only to save the woman whom his former master loved, and to serve the King even while seeming to disobey him. But Henry cannot believe it. When he hears of Rosamund's flight, his anger against Becket is poisoned with the madness of jealousy. He breaks out with a cry of fierce desire for his death. And at this hint, four of the Barons, who have long hated Becket, set out to assassinate him.

The final scene in the Cathedral is full of strength and splendour. Even here a ray of sweetness falls into the gloom, in the presence of Rosamund, praying for Becket in his perils: —

Save that dear head which now is Canterbury,
Save him, he saved my life, he saved my child,

Save him, his blood would darken Henry's name,
Save him, till all as saintly as thyself,
He miss the searching flame of Purgatory,
And pass at once to perfect Paradise.

But the end is inevitable. Becket meets it as fearlessly as he has lived, crying as the blows of the assassins fall upon him before the altar,—

At the right hand of Power —
Power and great glory — for thy church, O Lord —
Into thy hands, O Lord — into thy hands —

Two years afterwards, he was canonized as a saint. His tomb became the richest and most popular of English shrines. King Henry himself came to it as a pilgrim, and submitted to public penance at the grave of the man who was too strong for him, even in death. The homage of the nation may not prove that Becket was a holy martyr, but at least it proves that he was one of the first of those great Englishmen "who taught the people to struggle for their liberties," and that Tennyson was right in choosing this man as the hero of his noblest historic drama.

In *Queen Mary*, we are called to watch the third great conflict of England. Church and people have triumphed. It has already

become clear that the English throne must be

Broad-bas'd upon the people's will,

and that religion will be a controlling influence in the life of the nation. But what type of religion? The Papacy and the Reformation have crossed swords and are struggling together for the possession of the sea-girt island. How sharp was the contest, how near the friends of Spain and Italy came to winning the victory over the friends of Germany and Holland and Switzerland, Tennyson has shown in his vivid picture of Mary's reign.

The characters are sharply drawn. Philip, with his icy sensuality and gigantic egotism ; Gardiner with his coarse ferocity,

His big baldness,

That irritable forelock which he rubs,

His buzzard beak, and deep incavern'd eyes ;

Reginald Pole, the suave, timorous, selfish ecclesiastic ; Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Ralph Bagenhall, brave, steadfast, honest men, English to the core ; Cranmer with his moments of weakness and faltering, well-intoned for by his deep faith and humble penitence and heroic martyrdom ; all these stand out before us like living figures against the

background of diplomatic intrigue and popular tumult. And Mary herself, — never has that unhappy queen, the victim of her own intense, passionate delusions, had such justice done to her. She came near to wrecking England. Tennyson does not let us forget that; but he softens our hatred and our horror with a touch of human pity for her own self-wreck as he shows her sitting upon the ground, desolate and desperate, moaning for the treacherous Philip in

A low voice

Lost in a wilderness where none can hear!

A voice of shipwreck on a shoreless sea!

A low voice from the dust and from the grave.

The drama which most naturally invites comparison with *Queen Mary* is Shakspere's *Henry VIII*. And it seems to me that if we lay the two works side by side, Tennyson's does not suffer even by this hazardous propinquity. Take the song of Queen Catherine:

Orpheus with his lute made trees
And the mountain-tops that freeze
Bow themselves when he did sing:
To his music plants and flowers
Ever sprung; as Sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.

Everything that heard him play
Even the billows of the sea
Hung their heads and then lay by.

In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or, hearing, die.

And then read Queen Mary's song :—

Hapless doom of woman happy in betrothing !
Beauty passes like a breath and love is lost in loathing :
Low, my lute : speak low, my lute, but say the world
is nothing —
Low, lute, low !

Love will hover round the flowers when they first
awaken ;
Love will fly the fallen leaf and not be overtaken :
Low, my lute ! oh low, my lute ! we fade and are
forsaken —
Low, dear lute, low !

Surely it is not too much to say that this
is infinitely more pathetic as well as more
musical than Shakspere's stiff little lyric.

Or if this comparison seem unfair, then
try the two dramas by their strength of
character-painting. Is not Tennyson's Philip
as vivid and as consistent as Shakspere's
Henry ? Does not the later Gardiner stand
out more clearly than the earlier, and the
younger Howard surpass the elder ? Is not
the legate Pole more lifelike than the legate
Campeius ? Is not Cecil's description of
Elizabeth more true and sharp, though less
high-flown, than Cranmer's ? We must ad-
mit that there are "purple patches" of elo-

quence, like Wolsey's famous speech upon ambition, in Shakspere's work, which are unrivalled. But taken altogether, as an historic drama, *Queen Mary* must rank not below, perhaps even above, *Henry VIII.*

The systematic undervaluation of Tennyson's dramatic work is a reproach to the intelligence of our critics. J. R. Green, the late historian of *The English People*, said that "all his researches into the annals of the twelfth century had not given him so vivid a conception of the character of Henry II. and his court as was embodied in Tennyson's *Becket*." Backed by an authority like this it is not too daring to predict that the day is coming when the study of Shakspere's historical plays will be reckoned no more important to an understanding of English history than the study of Tennyson's Trilogy.

THE BIBLE IN TENNYSON.

THE BIBLE IN TENNYSON.

IT is safe to say that there is no other book which has had so great an influence upon the literature of the world as the Bible. And it is almost as safe — at least with no greater danger than that of starting an instructive discussion — to say that there is no other literature which has felt this influence so deeply or shown it so clearly as the English.

The cause of this latter fact is not far to seek. It may be, as a discontented French critic suggests, that it is partly due to the inborn and incorrigible tendency of the Anglo-Saxon mind to drag religion and morality into everything. But certainly this tendency would never have taken such a distinctly Biblical form had it not been for the beauty and vigour of our common English version of the Scriptures. These qualities were felt by the people even before they were praised by the critics. Apart from all religious prepossessions, men and women and children

were fascinated by the native power and grace of the book. The English Bible was popular, in the broadest sense, long before it was recognized as one of our noblest English classics. It has coloured the talk of the household and the street, as well as moulded the language of scholars. It has been something more than a “well of English undefiled ;” it has become a part of the spiritual atmosphere. We hear the echoes of its speech everywhere ; and the music of its familiar phrases haunts all the fields and groves of our fine literature.

It is not only to the theologians and the sermon-makers that we look for Biblical allusions and quotations. We often find the very best and most vivid of them in writers professedly secular. Poets like Shakspere, Milton, and Wordsworth ; novelists like Scott and romancers like Hawthorne ; essayists like Bacon, Steele, and Addison ; critics of life, unsystematic philosophers, like Carlyle and Ruskin, — all draw upon the Bible as a treasury of illustrations, and use it as a book equally familiar to themselves and to their readers. It is impossible to put too high a value upon such a universal volume, even as a mere literary possession.

It forms a bond of sympathy between the most cultivated and the simplest of the people. The same book lies upon the desk of the scholar and in the cupboard of the peasant. If you touch upon one of its narratives, every one knows what you mean. If you allude to one of its characters or scenes, your reader's memory supplies an instant picture to illuminate your point. And so long as its words are studied by little children at their mothers' knees and recognized by high critics as the model of pure English, we may be sure that neither the jargon of science nor the slang of ignorance will be able to create a Shibboleth to divide the people of our common race. There will be a medium of communication in the language and imagery of the English Bible.

This much, by way of introduction, I have felt it necessary to say, in order to mark the spirit of this essay. For the poet whose works we are to study is at once one of the most scholarly and one of the most widely popular of English writers. At least one cause of his popularity is that there is so much of the Bible in Tennyson. How much, few even of his most ardent lovers begin to understand.

I do not know that the attempt has ever been made before to collect and collate all the Scriptural allusions and quotations in his works, and to trace the golden threads which he has woven from that source into the woof of his poetry. The delight of “fresh woods and pastures new”—so rare in this over-explored age—has thus been mine. I have found nearly three hundred direct references to the Bible in the poems of Tennyson; and have given a list of them in the appendix to this book. This may have some value for professed Tennysonians, and for them alone it is given. The general reader would find it rather dry pasturage. But there is an aspect of the subject which has a wider interest. And in this essay I want to show how closely Tennyson has read the Bible, how well he understands it, how much he owes to it, and how clearly he stands out as, in the best sense, a defender of the faith.

I.

On my table lies the first publication which bears the name of Alfred Tennyson: a thin pamphlet, in faded gray paper, containing the *Prolusiones Academicæ*, recited

at the University of Cambridge in 1829. Among them is one with the title : *Timbuc-
too* ; A Poem which obtained the Chancellor's Medal, etc., by A. Tennyson, of Trinity College.

On the eleventh page, in a passage describing the spirit of poetry which fills the branches of the “great vine of Fable,” we find these lines : —

There is no mightier Spirit than I to sway
The heart of man: and teach him to attain
By shadowing forth the Unattainable;
And step by step to scale the mighty stair
Whose landing place is wrapped about with clouds
Of glory of Heaven.

And at the bottom of the page stands this foot-note : *Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.*

This is the earliest Biblical allusion that we can identify in the writings of Tennyson. Even the most superficial glance will detect its beauty and power. There are few who have not felt the lofty attraction of the teachings of Christ, in which the ideal of holiness shines so far above our reach, while we are continually impelled to climb towards it. Especially these very words about perfection, which He spoke in the Sermon

on the Mount, have often lifted us upward just because they point our aspirations to a goal so high that it seems inaccessible. The young poet who sets a jewel like this in his earliest work shows not only that he has understood the moral sublimity of the doctrine of Christ, but also that he has rightly conceived the mission of noble poetry,— to idealize human life. Once and again in his later writings we see the same picture of the soul rising step by step

To higher things;

and catch a glimpse of those vast altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God.

In the poem entitled *Isabel* — one of the best in the slender volume of 1830 — there is a line which reminds us that Tennyson must have known his New Testament in the original language. He says that all the fairest forms of nature are types of the noble woman whom he is describing, —

And thou of God in thy great charity.

No one who was not familiar with the Greek of St. Paul and St. John would have been bold enough to speak of the “charity of God.” It is a phrase which throws a golden light upon the thirteenth chapter of the

First Epistle to the Corinthians, and brings the human love into harmony and union with the divine.

The May Queen is a poem which has sung itself into the hearts of the people everywhere. The tenderness of its sentiment and the exquisite cadence of its music have made it beloved in spite of its many faults. Yet I suppose that the majority of readers have read it again and again, without recognizing that one of its most melodious verses is a direct quotation from the third chapter of *Job*.

And the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

This is one of the instances — by no means rare — in which the translators of our English Bible have fallen unconsciously into the rhythm of the most perfect poetry ; and it is perhaps the best illustration of Tennyson's felicitous use of the very words of Scripture.

There are others, hardly less perfect, in the wonderful sermon which the Rector in *Aylmer's Field* delivers after the death of Edith and Leolin. It is a mosaic of Bible language, most curiously wrought, and fused into one living whole by the heat of an intense sorrow. How like a heavy, dull

refrain of prophetic grief and indignation
recurs the dreadful text,

Your house is left unto you desolate.

The solemn association of the words lends the force of a superhuman and unimpassioned wrath to the preacher's language, and the passage stands as a monumental denunciation of

The social lies that sin against the strength of youth.

Enoch Arden's parting words to his wife contain some beautiful fragments of Scripture embedded in the verse :

Cast all your cares on God; that anchor holds.
Is He not yonder in the uttermost
Parts of the morning? If I flee to these
Can I go from Him? and the sea is His,
The sea is His: He made it.

The Idylls of the King are full of delicate and suggestive allusions to the Bible. Take for instance the lines from the *Holy Grail* :—

When the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change.

Here is a commentary most illuminative, on the fifth and sixth verses of the second chapter of *Philippians*. Or again, in the same Idyll, where the hermit says to Sir Percivale, after his unsuccessful quest, —

Thou hast not lost thyself to find thyself,
we are reminded of the words of Christ and
the secret of all victory in spiritual things :
He that loseth his life shall find it.

In *The Coming of Arthur*, while the trumpet blows and the city seems on fire with sunlight dazzling on cloth of gold, the long procession of knights pass before the King, singing their great song of allegiance. It is full of warrior's pride and delight of battle, clanging battle-axe and flashing brand, — a true song for the heavy fighters of the days of chivalry. But it has also a higher touch, a strain of spiritual grandeur, which although it may have no justification in an historical picture of the Round Table, yet serves to lift these knights of the poet's imagination up into an ideal realm and set them marching as ghostly heroes of faith and loyalty through all ages.

The King will follow Christ, and we the King.

Compare this line with the words of St. Paul : *Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ.* They teach us that the lasting devotion of men is rendered not to the human, but to the divine, in their heroes. He who would lead others must first learn

to follow One who is higher than himself. Without faith it is not only impossible to please God, but also impossible to rule men. King Arthur is the ideal of one who has heard a secret word of promise and seen a vision of more than earthly glory, by virtue of which he becomes the leader and master of his knights, able to inspire their hopes and unite their aspirations and bind their service to himself in the fellowship of the Round Table.

And now turn to one of the latest poems that Tennyson has given us: *Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After*. Sad enough is its lament for broken dreams, dark with the gloom of declining years, when the grasshopper has become a burden and desire has failed and the weary heart has grown afraid of that which is high; but at the close the old man rises again to the sacred strain:—

Follow you the star that lights a desert pathway, yours
or mine,

Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is
divine.

Follow Light and do the Right— for man can half con-
trol his doom—

Till you see the deathless angel seated in the vacant tomb.

II.

When we come to speak of the Biblical scenes and characters to which Tennyson refers, we find so many that the difficulty is to choose. He has recognized the fact that an allusion wins half its power from its connection with the reader's memory and previous thought. In order to be forcible and effective it must be at least so familiar as to awaken a train of associations. An allusion to something which is entirely strange and unknown may make an author appear more learned, but it does not make him seem more delightful. Curiosity may be a good atmosphere for the man of science to speak in, but the poet requires a sympathetic medium. He should endeavour to touch the first notes of well-known airs, and then memory will supply the accompaniment to enrich his music. This is what Tennyson has done, with the instinct of genius, in his references to the stories and personages of the Bible.

His favourite allusion is to Eden and the mystical story of Adam and Eve. This occurs again and again, in *The Day-Dream*, *Maud*, *In Memoriam*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, *The Princess*, *Milton*, *Enid*,

and *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*. The last instance is perhaps the most interesting, on account of a double change which has been made in the form of the allusion. In the edition of 1842 (the first in which the poem appeared) the self-assertive peasant who refuses to become a lover says to the lady of high degree, —

Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,
 From yon blue heavens above us bent,
 The gardener Adam and his wife
 Smile at the claims of long descent.

In later editions this was altered to “the grand old gardener and his wife.” But in this form the reference was open to misunderstanding. I remember a charming young woman, who once told me she had always thought the lines referred to some particularly pious old man who had formerly taken care of Lady Clara’s flower-beds, and who now smiled from heaven at the foolish pride of his mistress. So perhaps it is just as well that Tennyson restored the line, in 1875, to its original form, and gave us “the gardener Adam” again, to remind us of the quaint distich —

When Adam delved and Eve span,
 Who was then the gentleman ?

The story of Jephtha's daughter is another of the Old Testament narratives for which the poet seems to have a predilection. It is told with great beauty and freedom in the *Dream of Fair Women*; *Aylmer's Field* touches upon it; and it reeurs in *The Flight*.

In *The Princess* we find the Queen of Sheba, Vashti, Miriam, Jael, Lot's wife, Jonah's gourd, and the Tower of Babel. And if your eopy of the Bible has the Apocrypha in it, you may add the story of Judith and Holofernes.

Esther appears in *Enid*, and Rahab in *Queen Mary*. In *Godiva* we read of the Earl's heart, —

As rough as Esau's hand;

and in *Locksley Hall* we see the piture of the earth standing

At gaze, like Joshua's moon in Ajalon.

The *Sonnet to Buonaparte* recalls to our memory

Those whom Gideon school'd with briers.

In the *Palace of Art* we behold the hand-writing on the wall at Belshazzar's Feast.

It would be impossible even to enumerate Tennyson's allusions to the life of Christ,

from the visit of the Magi, which appears in *Morte d'Arthur* and *The Holy Grail*, down to the line in *Balin and Balan* which tells of

That same spear
Wherewith the Roman pierced the side of Christ.

But to my mind the most beautiful of all the references to the New Testament is the passage in *In Memoriam* which describes the reunion of Mary and Lazarus after his return from the grave. With what a human interest does the poet clothe the familiar story ! How reverently and yet with what natural and simple pathos does he touch upon the more intimate relations of the three persons who are the chief actors ! The question which has come a thousand times to every one that has lost a dear friend, — the question whether love survives in the other world, whether those who have gone before miss those who are left behind and have any knowledge of their grief, — this is the suggestion which brings the story home to us and makes it seem real and living.

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
And home to Mary's house return'd,
Was this demanded, — if he yearn'd
To hear her weeping by his grave ?

"Where wert thou brother those four days?"

There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die,
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crown'd
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist.

Then follows that marvellous description of Mary, — a passage which seems to me to prove the superiority of poetry, as an art, over painting and sculpture. For surely neither marble nor canvas ever held such a beautiful figure of devotion as that which breathes in these verses: —

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
No other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And He that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure ;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is their blessedness like theirs ?

It does not seem possible that the changing fashions of poetic art should ever make verses like these seem less exquisite, or that Time should ever outwear the sweet and simple power of this conception of religion.

There is no passage in the range of literature which expresses more grandly the mystery of death, or shows more attractively the happiness of an unquestioning personal faith in Him who, alone of men, has solved it and knows the answer. I cannot bear to add anything to it by way of comment, except perhaps these words of Emerson : “ Of immortality, the soul, when well employed, is incurious. It is so well that it is sure it will be well. It asks no questions of the Supreme Being.”

The poem of *Rizpah*, which was first published in the volume of *Ballads* in 1880, is an illustration of dramatic paraphrase from the Bible. The story of the Hebrew mother watching beside the dead bodies of her sons whom the Gibconites had hanged upon the hill, and defending them night and day for

six months from the wild beasts and birds of prey, is transformed into the story of an English mother, whose son has been executed for robbery and hung in chains upon the gibbet. She is driven wild by her grief ; hears her boy's voice wailing through the wind, "O mother, come out to me ;" creeps through the rain and the darkness to the place where the chains are creaking and groaning with their burden ; gropes and gathers all that is left of what was once her child and carries him home to bury him beside the churchyard wall. And then, when she is accused of theft, she breaks out in a passion of defense. It is a mother's love justifying itself against a cruel law. Those poor fragments which the wind and the rain had spared were hers, by a right divine, — bone of her bone, — she had nursed and cradled her baby, and all that was left belonged to her ; justice had no claim which could stand against hers.

Theirs ? O no ! they are mine, — not theirs, — *they had moved in my side !*

A famous writer has said of this passage, "Nothing more piteous, more passionate, more adorable for intensity of beauty was ever before this wrought by human cunning into the likeness of such words as words are powerless to praise."

III.

In trying to estimate the general influence of the Bible upon the thought and feeling of Tennyson we have a more delicate and difficult task. For the teachings of Christianity have become a part of the moral atmosphere of the age ; and it is hard for us to tell just what any man would have been without them, or just how far they have made him what he is, while we are looking at him through the very same medium in which we ourselves are breathing. If we could get out of ourselves, if we could divest ourselves of all those views of God and duty and human life which we have learned so early that they seem to us natural and inevitable, we might perhaps be able to arrive at a more exact discrimination. But this would be to sacrifice a position of vital sympathy for one of critical judgment. The loss would be greater than the gain. It is just as well for the critic to recognize that he is hardly able

To sit as God, holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all.

Tennyson himself has described the mental paralysis, the spiritual distress, which follow

that attempt. A critic ought to be free from prejudices, but surely not even for the sake of liberty should he make himself naked of convictions. To float on wings above the earth will give one a bird's-eye view; but for a man's-eye view we must have a standing-place on the earth. And after all the latter may be quite as true, even though it is not absolutely colourless.

The effect of Christianity upon the poetry of Tennyson may be felt, first of all, in its general moral quality. By this it is not meant that he is always or often preaching, or drawing pictures

“To point a moral or adorn a tale.”

Didactic art sometimes misses its own end by being too instructive. We find in Tennyson's poems many narratives of action and descriptions of character which are simply left to speak for themselves and teach their own lessons. In this they are like the histories in the *Book of Judges* or the *Books of the Kings*. The writer takes it for granted that the reader has a heart and a conscience. Compare in this respect, the perfect simplicity of the domestic idyll of *Dora* with the *Book of Ruth*.

But at the same time the poet can hardly

help revealing, more by tone and accent than by definite words, his moral sympathies. Tennyson always speaks from the side of virtue; and not of that new and strange virtue which some of our later poets have exalted, and which when it is stripped of its fine garments turns out to be nothing else than the unrestrained indulgence of every natural impulse; but rather of that old-fashioned virtue whose laws are "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control," and which finds its highest embodiment in the morality of the New Testament. Read, for example, his poems which deal directly with the subject of marriage: *The Miller's Daughter*, *Isabel*, *Lady Clare*, *The Lord of Burleigh*, *Locksley Hall*, *Love and Duty*, *The Wreck*, *Aylmer's Field*, *Enoch Arden*, the latter part of *The Princess*, and many different passages of the *Idylls*. From whatever side he approaches the subject, whether he is painting with delicate, felicitous touches the happiness of truly-wedded hearts, or denouncing the sins of avarice and pride which corrupt the modern marriage-mart of society, or tracing the secret evil which poisoned the court of Arthur and shamed the golden head of Guinevere, his ideal is always the perfect

and deathless union of two lives in one, "which is commended of St. Paul to be honourable among all men." To him woman seems loveliest when she has

The laws of marriage character'd in gold
Upon the blanched tablets of her heart,

and man strongest when he has learned

To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds.

The theology of Tennyson has been accused of a pantheistic tendency ; and it cannot be denied that there are expressions in his poems which seem to look in that direction, or at least to look decidedly away from the conception of the universe as a vast machine and its Maker as a supernatural machinist who has constructed the big watch and left it to run on by itself until it wears out. But surely this latter view, which fairly puts God out of the world, is not the view of the Bible. The New Testament teaches us, undoubtedly, to distinguish between Him and His works ; but it also teaches that He is in His works, or rather that all His works are in Him, — *in Him*, says St. Paul, *we live and move and have our being*. Light is His garment. Life is His breath.

God is law say the wise ; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law, the thunder is yet His voice.

But if I wished to prove, against those who doubted, Tennyson's belief in a living, personal, spiritual God, immanent in the universe, yet not confused with it, I should turn to his doctrine of prayer. There are many places in his poems where prayer is, not explained, but simply justified, as the highest activity of a human soul and a real bond between God and man. In these very lines on *The Higher Pantheism*, from which I have just quoted, there is a verse which can only be interpreted as the description of a personal intercourse between the divine and the human : —

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit
can meet, —
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and
feet.

Of Enoch Arden in the dreadful loneliness
of that rich island where he was cast away
it is said that

Had not his poor heart
Spoken with That, which being everywhere
Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all alone,
Surely the man had died of solitude.

When he comes back, after the weary years
of absence, to find his wife wedded to an-

other, and his home no longer his, it is by prayer that he obtains strength to keep his generous resolve

Not to tell her, never to let her know,
and to bear the burden of his secret to the lonely end. Edith, in the drama of Harold, when her last hope breaks and the shadow of gloom begins to darken over her, cries, —

No help but prayer,
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world
And touches Him that made it.

King Arthur, bidding farewell to the last of his faithful knights, says to him, —

Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

But lest any one should say that these passages are merely dramatic, and do not express the personal faith of the poet, turn to the solemn invocation in which he has struck the keynote of his deepest and most personal poem, —

Strong Son of God, immortal Love !

It is the poet's own prayer. No man could have written it save one who believed that God is Love, and that Love is incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ.

Next to the question of the reality of God, comes the problem of human life and destiny. And this has a twofold aspect. First, in regard to the present world, is man moving upward or downward; is good stronger than evil or evil stronger than good; is life worth living, or is it a cheat and a failure? Second, in regard to the future, is there any hope of personal continuance beyond death? To both of these inquiries Tennyson gives an answer which is in harmony with the teachings of the Bible.

He finds the same difficulties and doubts in the continual conflict between good and evil which are expressed in Job and Ecclesiastes. Indeed so high an authority as Professor Plumptre has said that "the most suggestive of all commentaries" on the latter book are Tennyson's poems, *The Vision of Sin*, *The Palace of Art*, and *Two Voices*. In the last of these he draws out in the form of a dialogue the strife between hope and despair in the breast of a man who has grown weary of life and yet is not ready

to embrace death. For, after all, the sum of the reasons which the first voice urges in favour of suicide is that nothing is worth very much, no man is of any real value to the world, *il n'y pas d'homme necessaire*, no effort produces any lasting result, all things are moving round and round in a tedious circle,—vanity of vanities,—if you are tired why not depart from the play? The tempted man — tempted to yield to the devil's own philosophy of pessimism — uses all argument to combat the enemy, but in vain, or at least with only half-success; until at last the night is worn away; he flings open his window and looks out upon the Sabbath morn.

The sweet church bells began to peal.

On to God's house the people prest;
Passing the place where each must rest,
Each entered like a welcome guest.

One walked between his wife and child,
With measured footfall firm and mild,
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood
Leaned on him, faithful, gentle, good,
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

And in their double love secure,
The little maiden walked demure,
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.

These three made unity so sweet,
My frozen heart began to beat,
Remembering its ancient heat.

I blest them, and they wandered on :
I spoke, but answer came there none ;
The dull and bitter voice was gone.

And then comes another voice whispering of a secret hope, and bidding the soul “Rejoice ! Rejoice !” If we hear in the first part of the poem the echo of the saddest book of the Old Testament, we hear also in the last part the tones of Him who said : *Let not your heart be troubled, in my Father’s house are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you.*

There are many places in the poems of Tennyson where he speaks with bitterness of the falsehood and evil that are in the world, the corruptions of society, the downward tendencies in human nature. He is in no sense a rose-water optimist. But he is in the truest sense a meliorist. He doubts not that

Thro’ the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

He believes that good

Shall be the final goal of ill.

He rests his faith upon the uplifting power of Christianity ; —

For I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

He hears the bells at midnight tolling the death of the old year, and he calls them to

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be!

In regard to the life beyond the grave, he asserts with new force and beauty the old faith in a personal immortality. The dim conception of an unconscious survival through the influence of our thoughts and deeds, which George Eliot has expressed in her poem of "the choir invisible," Tennyson finds to be

A faith as vague as all unsweet.
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet.

The Christian doctrine of a personal recognition of friends in the other world has never been more distinctly uttered than in these words. It is not, indeed, supported by any metaphysical arguments; nor are we concerned thus to justify it. Our only purpose now is to show—and after these verses who can doubt it—that the poet

has kept the faith which he learned in his father's house and at his mother's knee.

On many other points I fain would touch, but must forbear. There is one more, however, on which the orthodoxy of the poet has been questioned, and by some critics positively denied. It is said that he has accepted the teachings of Universalism. A phrase from *In Memoriam*,

The larger hope,—

has been made a watchword by those who defend the doctrine of a second probation, and a sign to be spoken against by those who reject it. Into this controversy I have no desire to enter. Nor is it necessary ; for, whatever the poet's expectation may be, there is not a line in all his works that contradicts or questions the teachings of Christ, nor even a line that runs beyond the limit of human thought into the mysteries of the unknown and the unknowable. The wages of sin is death ; the wages of virtue is to go on and not to die. This is the truth which he teaches on higher authority than his own. "The rest," as Hamlet says, "is silence." But what is the end of all these conflicts, these struggles, these probations ? What the final result of this strife between sin and

virtue? What the consummation of oppugnancies and interworkings? The poet looks onward through the mists and shadows and sees only God;—

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

And if any one shall ask what this far-off divine event is, we may answer in the words of St. Paul:—

For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For, he put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put in subjection, it is evident that he is excepted who did subject all things unto him. And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all.

And now, as we bring to a close this brief study of a subject which I trust has proved larger than it promised at first to those who had never looked into it, what are our conclusions? Or if this word seem too exact

and formal, what are our impressions in regard to the relations between Tennyson and the Bible ?

It seems to me that we cannot help seeing that the poet owes a large debt to the Christian Scriptures, not only for their formative influence upon his mind and for the purely literary material in the way of illustrations and allusions which they have given him, but also, and more particularly, for the creation of a moral atmosphere, a medium of thought and feeling, in which he can speak freely and with assurance of sympathy to a very wide circle of readers. He does not need to be always explaining and defining. There is much that is taken for granted, much that goes without saying. What a world of unspoken convictions lies behind such poems as *Dora* and *Enoch Arden*. Their beauty is not in themselves alone, but in the air that breathes around them, in the light that falls upon them from the faith of the centuries. Christianity is something more than a system of doctrines ; it is a life, a tone, a spirit, a great current of memories, beliefs and hopes flowing through millions of hearts. And he who launches his words upon this current finds that they are carried

with a strength beyond his own, and freighted often with a meaning which he himself has not fully understood as it flashed through him.

But, on the other hand, we cannot help seeing that the Bible gains a wider influence and a new power over men as it flows through the poet's mind upon the world. Its narratives and its teachings clothe themselves in modern forms of speech, and find entrance into many places which otherwise were closed against them. I do not mean by this that poetry is better than the Bible, but only that poetry lends wings to Christian truth. People who would not read a sermon will read a poem. And though its moral and religious teachings may be indirect, though they may proceed by silent assumption rather than by formal assertion, they exercise an influence which is perhaps the more powerful because it is unconscious. The Bible is in continual danger of being desiccated by an exhaustive (and exhausting) scientific treatment. When it comes to be regarded chiefly as a compendium of exact statements of metaphysical doctrine, the day of its life will be over, and it will be ready for a place in the museum of anti-

quities. It must be a power in literature if it is to be a force in society. For literature, as a wise critic has defined it, is just “the best that has been thought and said in the world.” And if this be true, literature is certain, not only to direct culture but also to mould conduct.

Is it possible, then, for wise and earnest men to look with indifference upon the course of what is often called, with a slighting accent, “mere *belles lettres*”? We might as well be careless about the air we breathe or the water we drink. Malaria is no less fatal than pestilence. The chief peril which threatens the permanence of Christian faith and morals is none other than the malaria of modern letters,—an atmosphere of dull, heavy, faithless materialism. Into this narcotic air the poetry of Tennyson blows like a pure wind from a loftier and serener height, bringing life and joy. His face looks out upon these darkening days,—grave, strong, purified by conflict, lighted by the inward glow of faith. He is become as one of the prophets,—a witness for God and for immortality.

THE
CHRONOLOGY OF TENNYSON.

CHRONOLOGY.

1809. ALFRED TENNYSON, the third son of the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, was born at Somersby, in Lincolnshire, August 6.

In the same year Elizabeth Barrett (afterwards Mrs. Robert Browning), Charles Darwin, and William Ewart Gladstone were born.

1824. The news of Byron's death seemed to Tennyson like an unspeakable calamity.

1827. POEMS BY TWO BROTHERS. London: printed for W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, and J. & J. Jackson, Louth. Charles and Alfred Tennyson, schoolboys at the grammar school in Louth, published this book anonymously.

1828. Alfred Tennyson entered Trinity College, Cambridge.

Among his intimate friends were Arthur Henry Hallam, Richard Monckton Milnes, John Mitchell Kemble, William Henry Brookfield, Henry Alford, James Spedding, and Richard Chevenix Trench.

1829. TIMBUCTOO: A Poem which obtained the Chancellor's Medal at the Cambridge Commencement, M.DCCC.XXIX. By A. Tennyson, of Trinity College. Printed in "Prolusiones Academicæ; MDCCCXXIX. Cantabrigiæ: typis academicis excudit Joannes Smith."

** This was burlesqued by William Makepeace Thackeray in *The Snob*, an undergraduate periodical; and highly praised in *The Athenaeum* (July 22, 1829), of which Frederick Denison Maurice and John Sterling were the editors.

1830. POEMS, CHIEFLY LYRICAL, by Alfred Tennyson. London: Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, Cornhill, 1830.

Charles Tennyson published *Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces*, by Charles Tennyson, Trin. Coll. Cambridge: published by R. Bridges, Market Hill, and sold by John Richardson, 91, Royal Exchange, London.

** William Wordsworth wrote from Cambridge: "We have also a respectable show of blossom in poetry—two brothers of the name of Tennyson; one in particular not a little promising."

1831. Contributed, "Anacreonties," "No More," and "A Fragment," to *The Gem: A Literary Annual*. London: W. Marshall.

** The "Poems chiefly Lyrical" were reviewed with favour in *The Westminster Review*, January; in *The Tatler*, February 23 and March 3, by Leigh Hunt; and in *The Englishman's Magazine*, August, by A. H. Hallam.

1832. POEMS by Alfred Tennyson. London: Edward Moxon, 64, New Bond Street. MDCCXXXIII. This is properly called the edition of 1833, although it was printed in December of the previous year.

Contributed a Sonnet, "Me my own fate to lasting sorrow doometh," to *Friendship's Offering: A Literary Album*. London: Smith, Elder & Co.; and a Sonnet, "There are three things which fill my heart with sighs," to *The Yorkshire Literary Annual*. London: Longmans & Co.

** Professor John Wilson ("Christopher North") attacked Tennyson as "the pet of a Cockney coterie," in *Blackwood's Magazine* for May.

1833. Contributed a Sonnet, "Check every outflash, every ruder sally," to *Friendship's Offering*.

Printed, THE LOVER'S TALE. By Alfred Tennyson. London: Edward Moxon, 64, New Bond Street. This was immediately suppressed and withdrawn from the press, because the author felt "the imperfection of the poem."

* * * A very severe criticism of the 1833 poems appeared in *The Quarterly Review* for July, and was attributed to the editor, John Gibson Lockhart.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge said in his "Table-Talk": "I have not read through all Mr. Tennyson's poems, which have been sent to me, but I think there are some things of a good deal of beauty in what I have seen. The misfortune is, that he has begun to write verses without very well understanding what metre is."

On September 15, Arthur Henry Hallam died suddenly at Vienna.

1835. * * * John Stuart Mill reviewed Tennyson's poems with great fairness and appreciation in *The Westminster Review* for July.

1837. Contributed Stanzas, "O that 't were possible" (the germ of "Maud") to *The Tribune*: edited by Lord Northampton. London: John Murray; and "St. Agnes" to *The Keepsake*: edited by Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley. London: Longmans & Co.

* * * *The Edinburgh Review* for October noticed Tennyson for the first time, and said that his stanzas in *The Tribune* "showed the hand of a true poet."

Walter Savage Landor wrote to a friend on December 9: "Yesterday a Mr. Moreton, a young man of rare judgment, read to me a manuscript by Mr. Tennyson very different in style from his printed poems. The subject is the death of Arthur. It is more Homeric than any poem of our time, and rivals some of the noblest parts of the *Odyssey*."

1838. Tennyson lived in London and was a member of the Anonymous Club, in company with Carlyle, Sterling, Thackeray, Forster, Lushington, Maeready, Landor.

1842. POEMS by Alfred Tennyson. In Two Volumes. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street. MDCCXLII.

. These volumes were reviewed by Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton) in *The Westminster Review*, October; by John Sterling in *The Quarterly Review*; and anonymously in *The Examiner*, May 28; *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, August; *The London University Magazine*, December; and *The Christian Examiner*, Boston, U. S. A., November. All of the criticisms were respectful, and most of them highly laudatory.

Within a year Carlyle, Dickens, Miss Mitford, Margaret Fuller, Emerson, and Poe were speaking of Tennyson with enthusiasm.

1843. Seeond edition of Poems in Two Volumes.

. Several malicious parodies of Tennyson appeared in the "Bon Gaultier Ballads" in *Tait's* and *Fraser's* Magazines.

1844. *.* Tennyson's portrait and a sketch of his character in Richard Hengist Horne's *A New Spirit of the Age*. London: Smith, Elder & Co.

Edgar Allan Poe wrote in *The Democratic Review*, New York, August: "I am not sure that Tennyson is not the greatest of poets."

1845. Reeived a pension of £200, through Sir Robert Peel; and published a third edition of Poems in Two Volumes.

. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton attacked Tennyson in *The New Timon: a Romance of London*: Henry Colburn.

Wordsworth wrote in a letter to Professor Henry Reed of Philadelphia: "Tennyson is decidedly the first of our living poets, and I hope will live to give the world still better things."

1846. Fourth edition of the Poems (and last in two volumes). Contributed "The New Timon and the Poets" (a bitter reply to Bulwer) to *Punch*, February 28; and "Afterthought" (a repentance for that reply) to *Punch*, March 7.

* * * James Russell Lowell on Keats and Tennyson in *Conversations on the Poets*. Cambridge (U. S. A.), 1846.

1847. *THE PRINCESS; A MEDLEY*. By Alfred Tennyson. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street. MDCCXLVII.

* * * A sketch of Tennyson in William Howitt's *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets*.

1848. Second Edition of the Princess; with a dedication to Henry Lushington. Fifth edition of the Poems, in one volume.

1849. Contributed lines, "To ——, You might have won the poet's fame," to *The Examiner*, March 24.

* * * A review of the Princess by Professor James Hadley of Yale College in *The New Englander*, May.

1850. *IN MEMORIAM*. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street. MDCCCL.

The second and third editions (with no change but the correction of two typographical errors) appeared in the same year.

Third Edition of the Princess, very much altered, and with the Songs added.

Sixth edition of the Poems.

Contributed lines, "Here often, when a child, I lay reelin'd," to *The Manchester Athenaeum Album*.

On June 13, Alfred Tennyson and Emily Sellwood were married at Shiplake Church, Oxfordshire.

On November 19, Alfred Tennyson was appointed to succeed William Wordsworth (died April 23) as Poet Laureate of England.

* * * Charles Kingsley published an essay on Tennyson in *Fraser's Magazine*, September.

1851. Contributed Stanzas, "What time I wasted youthful hours," and "Come not when I am dead," to *The Keepsake*: edited by Miss Power. London: David Bogue.

Sonnet to W. C. Macready, read at the valedictory dinner to the actor, and printed in *The Household Narrative of Current Events*, February–March. Seventh edition of the Poems, containing three new pieces, and the dedication "Queen."

Fourth edition of the Princess, with additions. Fourth edition of *In Memoriam*, adding section LIX, "O sorrow wilt thou live with me?" Presented, as Poet Laureate, to the Queen, at Buckingham Palace, March 6.

Lived at Twickenham. Travelled in France and Italy.

1852. ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON. By Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate. London: Edward Moxon. 1852.

Contributed "Britons, guard your own," to *The Examiner*, January 31; "The Third of February," and "Hands all round," to the same paper, February 7. These poems were called forth by the general excitement consequent on the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon.

Tennyson's oldest son, Hallam, was born at Twickenham.

1853. Eighth Edition of the Poems, with additions. Fifth Edition of the Princess, with additions.

Went to live at Farringford, Freshwater, Isle of Wight.

1854. THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE. First printed in *The Examiner*, December 9, afterwards on a quarto sheet for distribution among the soldiers before Sebastopol.

Tennyson's second son, Lionel, was born at Farringford.

F. D. Maurice dedicated his *Theological Essays* to Tennyson.

E. K. Kane, the Arctic explorer, named a cliff in Greenland, "Tennyson's Monument."

1855. MAUD, AND OTHER POEMS. By Alfred Tennyson, D. C. L., Poet Laureate. London: Edward Moxon. 1855.

The University of Oxford had conferred the degree of D. C. L. upon him in May.

** Maud was reviewed in *Blackwood's Magazine*, September; *The Edinburgh Review*, October; *The National Review*, October; for the most part unfavourably. Dr. R. J. Mann published Tennyson's 'Maud' *Vindicated: an Explanatory Essay*. London: Jarrold & Sons.

George Brimley's essay on Tennyson was published in *Cambridge Essays*.

1856. Second edition of Maud, with many additions.

1857. Printed ENID AND NIMUE: OR THE TRUE AND THE FALSE, an Arthurian poem, suppressed before publication.

** Bayard Taylor visited Tennyson at Farringford, and walked with him along the cliffs. "I was struck with the variety of his knowledge. Not a little flower on the downs escaped his notice, and the geology of the coast, both terrestrial and submarine, was perfectly familiar to him. I thought of a remark I once heard from a distinguished English author (Thackeray), that Tennyson was the wisest man he knew."

1858. Added two stanzas to the National Anthem, on the marriage of the Princess Royal. Printed in *The Times*, January 29.

1859. IDYLLS OF THE KING. By Alfred Tennyson, D. C. L., Poet Laureate. London: Edward Moxon & Co., Dover Street. 1859.

Ten thousand copies were sold within six weeks. Contributed verses entitled "The War" to *The Times*, May 9; in favour of the formation of volunteer rifle-corps.

Contributed verses entitled "The Grandmother's Apology" to *Once a Week*, July 16. Visited Portugal with Francis Turner Palgrave.

* * Peter Bayne published *Tennyson and his Teachers*. James Hogg & Sons: Edinburgh and London.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote in his diary: "Finished the four Idylls. The first and third could have come only from a great poet. The second and fourth do not seem to me so good." June 20, 1859. (The first and third were Enid and Elaine; the second and fourth were Vivien and Guinevere.)

1860. Contributed "Sea Dreams: An Idyll," to *Macmillan's Magazine*, January; and "Tithonus" to *The Cornhill Magazine*, February.

1861. Contributed "The Sailor Boy" to *Victoria Regia*, edited by Emily Faithfull, Christmas.

Revisited the Pyrenees, where he had travelled with Arthur Hallam two-and-thirty years before.

1862. A new edition of the Idylls, with a dedication to the memory of Prince Albert: "These to his memory since he held them dear."

Wrote an "Ode: May the First, 1862;" sung at the opening of the International Exhibition; and printed in *Fraser's Magazine*, June.

* * * *An Analysis of In Memoriam*, by the late Rev. Frederick W. Robertson of Brighton. London: Smith, Elder & Co.

1863. Published on the arrival of the Princess Alexandra, March 7, A WELCOME. London: Edward Moxon & Co.

Contributed "Attempts at Classic Metres in Quantity" to *The Cornhill Magazine*, December.

1864. ENOCH ARDEN, ETC. By Alfred Tennyson, D. C. L., Poet Laureate. London: Edward Moxon & Co., Dover Street. 1864.

Contributed an "Epitaph on the late Duchess of Kent" to *The Court Journal*, March 19.

* * * "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art," by Walter Bagehot in *The National Review*, November.

Hippolyte Adolphe Taine compared Tennyson unfavourably with De Musset, in his *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. Paris: 1864.

Garibaldi visited Tennyson at Farringford.

1865. A SELECTION FROM THE WORKS OF ALFRED TENNYSON. This volume contains six new poems: "The Captain," "On a Mourner," "Home they brought him slain with spears," and three "Sonnets to a Coquette."

The Queen offered him a baronetcy, which he declined; and he was elected a member of the Royal Society.

Tennyson's mother died, February 21, aged 84.

* * * J. Leicester Warren contributed "The Bibliography of Tennyson" to *The Fortnightly Review*, October 1.

Three great Teachers: Carlyle, Tennyson, and Ruskin. By Alexander H. Japp, LL. D., London: Smith, Elder & Co.

1867. THE WINDOW: OR THE SONGS OF THE WRENS. Printed at the private press of Sir Ivor Bertie Guest, of Cranford Manor, now Lord Wimbourne.

These songs were written to be set to music by Mr. Arthur Sullivan, and so published in 1870.

Tennyson bought the Greenhill estate, in Sussex, near Haslemere.

The sale of his poems (in English) in France, Spain, and Portugal was about 5,000 copies in this year.

1868. Contributed "The Victim" to *Good Words*, January ; "On a Spiteful Letter" to *Once a Week*, January ; "Wages" to *Macmillan's Magazine*, February ; "1865-1866" to *Good Words*, March ; and "Lucretius" to *Macmillan's Magazine*, May.

** Professor R. C. Jebb praised the historical accuracy of "Lucretius" in *Macmillan's Magazine*, June.

S. Cheetham printed a scholarly review of the Arthurian Legends in *The Contemporary*, April.

A Study of the Works of Alfred Tennyson. By Edward Campbell Tainsh. London: Chapman & Hall. Second edition, 1870.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow visited Farringford.

1869. **THE HOLY GRAIL AND OTHER POEMS.** By Alfred Tennyson, D. C. L., Poet Laureate. Strahan & Co., Publishers. 56 Ludgate Hill, London. Of this volume 40,000 copies were ordered in advance.

Tennyson was elected Honorary Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge ; and took possession of Aldworth, his new house in Sussex.

** D. Barron Brightwell published his *Concordance to the Entire Works of Alfred Tennyson*. London: E. Moxon & Co.

Alfred Austin contributed "The Poetry of the Period" to *Temple Bar*, in which he declared that "Mr. Tennyson has no sound pretensions to be called a great poet."

1870. ** Henry Alford printed a review of the *Idylls of the King*, in *The Contemporary*, January. *In Memoriam* was translated into German.

1871. Contributed "The Last Tournament" to *The Contemporary*, December.

1872. GARETH AND LYNETTE, ETC. By Alfred Tennyson, D. C. L., Poet Laureate. Strahan & Co. 56, Ludgate Hill, London. 1872.

. Richard Holt Hutton contributed a review of Tennyson to *Macmillan's Magazine*, December.

Robert Buchanan printed an article entitled "Tennyson's Charm" in *St. Paul's Magazine*, March.

1873. *.* J. Hutchinson printed an article on "Tennyson as a Botanist" in *St. Paul's Magazine*, October.

1874. A WELCOME TO MARIE ALEXANDROVNA, DUCHESS OF EDINBURGH. This was first printed in *The Times*, and afterwards issued on a separate sheet.

1875. QUEEN MARY. A DRAMA. By Alfred Tennyson. Henry S. King & Co. London. 1875.

Prefixed a Sonnet to Lord Lyttelton's *Memoir of William Henry Brookfield*.

. Edmund Clarence Stedman published a review of Tennyson in *Victorian Poets*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. This was supplemented by an additional chapter in the edition of 1887.

1877. HAROLD. A DRAMA. By Alfred Tennyson. Henry S. King & Co. London. 1877.

Contributed a prefatory Sonnet to the first number of *The Nineteenth Century*, March; also "Montenegro," a sonnet, to the same number: a "Sonnet to Victor Hugo" to *The Nineteenth Century*, June; "Achilles over the Trench" to *The Nineteenth Century*, August.

Lines on Sir John Franklin in Westminster Abbey.

. Bayard Taylor printed a criticism of Tennyson in *The International Review*, New York, May.

1878. Contributed "The Revenge, A Ballad of the Fleet," to *The Nineteenth Century*, March.

Made a tour in Ireland.

. *Studies in the Idylls.* By Henry Eisdale. London: H. S. King & Co. 1878.

1879. THE LOVER'S TALE. By Alfred Tennyson. London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1 Paternoster Square. 1879.

This was a revision of the poem suppressed in 1833, and the publication was made necessary by the fact that it had been pirated.

Tennyson's play of THE FALCON was produced at the St. James Theatre with Mrs. Kendal as the heroine, December.

. *Tennysonian.* Second edition (by Richard Herne Shepherd). London: Pickering & Co. 1879.

Tennyson's brother, the Rev. Charles Tennyson Turner, died at Malvern.

1880. BALLADS, AND OTHER POEMS. By Alfred Tennyson. London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1 Paternoster Square. 1880.

Contributed two poems to *St. Nicholas*, an American magazine for children.

Prefixed lines entitled "Midnight, June 30, 1879," to Charles Tennyson Turner's *Collected Sonnets*.

Tennyson declined the nomination for Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University, on the ground that he was unwilling to be "a party candidate for the conservative club."

. "A New Study of Tennyson," by J. Comyns Carr, in *The Cornhill Magazine*, February and July.

. Theodore Watts wrote a sonnet "To Alfred Tennyson, on his publishing, in his seventy-first year, the most richly various volume of English verse that has appeared in his own century."

1881. The play of THE CUP was produced at the Lyceum Theatre, with Henry Irving and Ellen Terry in the leading parts, January 3.

Contributed "Despair" to *The Nineteenth Century*; and "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade" to *Macmillan's Magazine*.

. Mr. Walter E. Wace published *Alfred Tennyson, His Life and Works*. Edinburgh: Macniven & Wallace.

1882. The play of THE PROMISE OF MAY was produced at the Globe Theatre, under the direction of Mrs. Bernard Beere.

. *A Study of the Princess*. By S. E. Dawson. Montreal: Dawson Brothers, Publishers.

A Key to Tennyson's In Memoriam. By Alfred Gatty, D. D. A New and Revised Edition. London: George Bell & Sons, York St., Covent Garden. 1882.

1883. Tennyson accompanied Mr. Gladstone on a sea-trip to Copenhagen, where they were received by the King and Queen of Denmark, the Czar and Czarina, the King and Queen of Greece, and the Princess of Wales.

Later in the year it was announced that Queen Victoria had offered a peerage to Tennyson and he had accepted it.

1884. THE CUP AND THE FALCON. By Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate. London: Macmillan & Co. 1884.

BECKET. By Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate. London: Macmillan & Co. 1884.

Also a New and Revised Edition of his complete Works.

Tennyson was gazetted Baron of Aldworth and Farringford, January 18th.

Elected President of the Incorporated Society of Authors.

* * * Mr. Henry J. Jennings published *Lord Tennyson. A Biographical Sketch*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Tennyson's In Memoriam. Its Purpose and Structure.
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* * * Hon. Roden Noel reviewed "The Poetry of Tennyson," in *The Contemporary Review*, February.

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* * * This was reviewed by Richard Holt Hutton (?) in *The Spectator*, December 18: by the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone in *The Nineteenth Century*, January, 1887: and by Walt Whitman in *The Critic*, New York, January 1, 1887.

1888. A new edition of Tennyson's complete works published by Macmillan & Co.

* * * An article in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, December 20, entitled "Is Tennyson a Spiritualist?"

* * * *A Companion to In Memoriam.* By Elizabeth Rachel Chapman. London: Macmillan & Co., & New York: 1888.

1889. Contributed "The Throstle" to *The New Review* for October.

* * * An article in *The Spectator*, February 2, entitled "Tennyson's Undertones," maintains that he is no spiritualist but a mystic; "the sense of an underlying life is strong in him."

Mr. Frederic W. H. Myers published an article in *The Nineteenth Century* for March, on "Tennyson as Prophet," in which he says: "Then they will look back on Tennyson as no belated dreamer, but as a leader who in the darkest hour of the world's thought would not despair of the destiny of man."

Prolegomena to In Memoriam. By Thomas Davidson. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

Professor T. R. Lounsbury published an article on "The Two Locksley Halls," in *Scribner's Magazine*, August.

Henry van Dyke published an article on "Tennyson's First Flight" in *Scribner's Magazine*, August; and an article on "The Bible in Tennyson" in *The Century Magazine*, August.

Tennyson's eightieth birthday, on August 6th, called out a great number of articles. Editorials in the *New York Times*, *Tribune*, and *Herald*; in *The Mail and Express*, by Mr. Edmund Gosse; in the *Hartford Daily Times*, by Mr. Frank C. Burr; in *The Athenaeum*, a sonnet by Mr. Theodore Watts; in *Macmillan's Magazine*, a sonnet by H. D. Rawnsley.

A LIST OF
BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS AND ALLUSIONS
FOUND IN THE
WORKS OF TENNYSON.

This list is probably very far from being complete. If any reader should discover errors or omissions, the author would be grateful for a memorandum of them.

A LIST OF BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS AND AL- LUSIONS FOUND IN THE WORKS OF TEN- NYSON.

TIMBUCTOO.

“And teach him to attain
By shadowing forth the Unattainable.”*
Matt. 5: 48.

SUPPOSED CONFESSIONS.

“My sin was as a thorn
Among the thorns that girt Thy brow.”
Matt. 27: 29.

“In this extrekest misery
Of ignorauce I should require
A sign.”
1 Cor. 1: 22.

“That happy morn
When angels spake to men aloud,
And thou and peace to earth were born.”
Luke 2: 10.

“Bring back this lamb into thy fold.”
Luke 15: 4.

“These little motes and grains shall be
Clothed on with immortality.”
1 Cor. 15: 53.

“As manna on my wilderness.”
Ex. 16: 15.

“That God would move
And strike the hard, hard rock, and thence,
Sweet in their utmost bitterness,
Would issue tears of penitence.”
Num. 20: 11.

* Be ye perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect.

THE KRAKEN.

“Until the latter fire shall heat the deep.”
Rev. 8: 8; 2 Pet. 3: 10.

ISABEL.

“The laws of marriage charactered in gold
 Upon the blanched tablets of her heart.”
Ps. 37: 31; 2 Cor. 3: 3.
 “And thou of God in thy great *charity.*”
1 John 4: 11.

To —.

“Like that strange angel which of old
 Until the breaking of the light
 Wrestled with wandering Israel.”
Gen. 32: 24.

THE DESERTED HOUSE.

“A mansion incorruptible.”
2 Cor. 5: 1.
 “The house was builded of the earth.”
1 Cor. 15: 47.

ADELINE.

“Sabæan spice.”
Is. 45: 11.

To J. M. KEMBLE.

“Arrows of lightnings.”
Zech. 9: 14.

BUONAPARTE.

“Late he learned humility
 Perforce, like those whom Gideon schooled with briers.”
Judges 8: 16.

SONNET X.

“The deluge.”
Gen. 7: 11.

TWO VOICES.

“Wonderfully made.”
Ps. 139: 14.
 “When first the world began
 Young Nature through five cycles ran
 And in the sixth she moulded man.”
Gen. 1: 26.

“A little lower than angels.”

Ps. 8: 5.

“Like Stephen’s.”

Acts 7: 55.

“The place he knew forgetteth him.”

Ps. 103: 16.

“He may not do the things he would.”

Gal. 5: 17.

“Rejoice! Rejoice!”

Phil. 4: 4.

WILL WATERPROOF (1842).

“Like Hezekiah’s, backward runs
The shadows of my days.”

Is. 38: 8.

THE PALACE OF ART.

“Howling in outer darkness.”

Matt. 8: 12.

“Common clay taken from the common earth
Moulded by God.”

Gen. 2: 7.

“And oft some brainless devil enters in
And drives them to the deep.”

Luke 8: 33.

“Like Herod when the shout was in his ears,
Struck through with pangs of hell.”

Acts 12: 21-23.

“Wrote ‘Mene, mene,’ and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.”

Dan. 5: 23.

THE PALACE OF ART. Edition of 1833: note, page 73.

“One was the Tishbite whom the raven fed,

As when he stood on Carmel-steeps,

With one arm stretched out bare, and mocked and said,
‘Come cry aloud — he sleeps.’

“Tall, eager, lean, and strong, his cloak windborne
Behind, his forehead heavenly-bright

From the clear marble pouring glorious scorn,
Lit as with inner light.”

1 Kings 18: 27.

“Robed David touching holy strings.”

2 Sam. 6: 5.

“Isaiah with fierce Ezekiel,
Swarth Moses by the Coptic sea.”

“As power and might
Abode in Samson’s hair.”

Judges 16: 17.

LADY CLARA VERE DE VERE.

“The gardener Adam and his wife.”

Gen. 2: 15.

THE MAY QUEEN. Conclusion.

“He taught me all the mercy, for he showed me all the sin.

Now, tho’ my lamp was lighted late, there’s One will
let me in.”

Matt. 25: 1.

“And the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are
at rest.”

Job 3: 17.

THE LOTOS-EATERS.

“The flower hath no toil.”

Matt. 6: 28.

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN.

“The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure; as when she went along
From Mizpeh’s towered gate with welcome light
With timbrel and with song.”

Judges 11: 34.

“Gross darkness.”

Is. 60: 2.

“Moreover it is written that my race
Hewed Ammon hip and thigh from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minneth.”

Judges 11: 33.

MORTE D’ARTHUR.

“Such times have not been since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.”

Matt. 2: 2, 3.

ST. SIMEON STYLITES.

“The meed of saints, the white robe and the palm.”
Rev. 7: 9.

“Pontius and Iscariot.”

Matt. 26: 14.

THE TALKING OAK.

“Thy leaf shall never fail.”

Ps. 1: 3.

THE GOLDEN YEAR.

“Cry like the daughters of the horse-leech, Give!”
Prov. 30: 15.

LOCKSLEY HALL.

“Joshua’s moon in Ajalon.”

Josh. 10: 12.

“But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.”
Matt. 11: 11.

GODIVA.

“A heart as rough as Esau’s hand.”

Gen. 27: 23.

THE DAY DREAM. L’ENVOI.

“For since the time when Adam first
 Embraced his Eve in happy hour,
 And every bird of Eden burst
 In carol, every bud to flower.”

Gen. 2: 23.

ST. AGNES’ EVE.

“So in my earthly house I am
 To that I hope to be.”

2 Cor. 5: 1.

“The Heavenly Bridegroom waits
 To make me pure of sin.”

Is. 62: 5.

“The Sabbaths of Eternity,
 One Sabbath deep and wide.”

Heb. 4: 9.

“The shining sea.”

Rev. 15: 2.

THE VISION OF SIN.

“Thou shalt not be saved by works.”

Gal. 2: 16.

To —.

“The many-headed beast.”

Rev. 13: 1.

ENOCH ARDEN.

“Cast all your cares on God.”

1 Pet. 5: 7.

“That anchor holds.”

Heb. 6: 19.

“The uttermost parts of the morning.”

Ps. 139: 9.

“The sea is His: He made it.”

Ps. 95: 5.

“Under the palm-tree.”

Judges 4: 5.

“These be palms

Whereof the happy people strowing cried,

‘Hosanna in the highest.’”

John 12: 13.

AYLMER'S FIELD.

“Dust are our frames.”

Gen. 3: 19.

“Sons of men, daughters of God.”

Gen. 6: 2.

“Pale as the Jephtha's daughter.”

Judges 11: 34.

“Behold

Your house is left unto you desolate.”

Luke 13: 35.

“Never since our bad earth became one sea.”

Gen. 7.

“Gash thyself, priest, and honour thy brute Baal.”

1 Kings 18: 28.

“The babe shall lead the lion.”

Is. 11: 6.

“The wilderness shall blossom as the rose.”

Is. 35: 1.

“Fares richly in fine linen.” *Luke 16: 19.*

“Leave all and follow me.” *Luke 18: 22.*

“Carpenter’s son.” *Matt. 13: 55.*

“Wonderful, Prince of Peace, the Mighty God.” *Is. 9: 6.*

“As not passing thro’ the fire
Bodies, but souls—thy children’s—thro’ the smoke.” *Lev. 18: 21.*

“The more base idolater.” *Col. 3: 5.*

“Rachel by the palmy well.” *Gen. 29: 10.*

“Ruth amid the fields of corn.” *Ruth 2.*

“Fair as the angel that said ‘Hail.’” *Luke 1: 28.*

“She walked,
Wearing the light yoke of that Lord of love
Who stilled the rolling wave of Galilee.” *Matt. 8: 26; 11: 30.*

“O thou that killest, hadst thou known
O thou that stonest, hadst thou understood
The things belonging to thy peace and ours.” *Luke 13: 34.*

“Poor in spirit.” *Matt. 5: 3.*

“Sent like the twelve-divided concubine
To inflame the tribes.” *Judges 19: 29.*

“Pharaoh’s darkness.” *Ex. 10: 21.*

“Folds as dense as those
Which hid the Holiest from the people’s eyes.” *Matt. 27: 45.*

“Their own gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.” *Gen. 42: 38.*

“ Will not another take their heritage.”

Acts 1: 20.

“ Those that swore

“ Not by the Temple, but by the gold.”

Matt. 23: 16.

SEA DREAMS.

“ The Apocalyptic millstone.”

Rev. 18: 21.

“ Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

Eph. 4: 27.

“ When the great Books, (see Daniel seven and ten,) Were opened.”

Dan. 7: 10.

“ Boanerges.”

Mark 3: 17.

THE PRINCESS.

“ All those hard things
That Sheba came to ask of Solomon.”

1 Kings 10: 1.

“ O Vashti, noble Vashti! Summon'd out
She kept her state and left the drunken king
To brawl at Shushan underneath the palms.”

Esther 1.

“ Let there be light and there was light.”

Gen. 1: 3.

“ Their cancell'd Babels.”

“ A new-world Babel, woman-built
And worse-confounded.”

Gen. 11: 9.

“ They mind us of the time
When we made bricks in Egypt.”

Ex. 1: 14.

(Judith and Holofernes.)

Apoc. Book of Judith.

“ A Jonah's gourd
Up in one night and due to sudden sun.”

Jonah 4: 6.

“ Between a cymball'd Miriam and a Jasl.”

Ex. 15: 20; Judges 4.

“Like that great dame of Lapidoth she sang.”
Judges 5: 1.

“Stiff as Lot’s wife.”
Gen. 19: 26.

THE GRANDMOTHER.

“The tongue is a fire.”
James 3: 6.

LITERARY SQUABBLES.

“When one small touch of charity
 Could lift them nearer God-like state
 Than if the crowded Orb should cry
 Like those who cried Diana great.”
Acts 19: 34.

NORTHERN FARMER.

“I weänt saäy men be loiars thaw summun said it in
 ’ääste.”
Ps. 116: 11.

ODE ON THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

“The shining table lands
 To which our God Himself is moon and sun.”
Rev. 21: 23.

WAGES.

“The wages of sin is death.”
Rom. 6: 23.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM.

“The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the
 plains—
 Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns ?”
Rom. 1: 20.

“Is not the vision He ? tho’ He be not that which He
 seems ?
 Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in
 dreams ?

“Speak to Him for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can
 meet—
 Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and
 feet.”
Ps. 65: 2; Rom. 8: 16; Acts 17: 27.

“ God is law say the wise ; O Soul and let us rejoice,
 For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.”

Ps. 77 : 18.

“ Law is God, say some : no God at all, says the fool ;
 For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a
 pool.”

Ps. 14 : 1.

“ And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man can-
 not see ;
 But if we could see and hear, this Vision — were it not
 He ? ”

Is. 64 : 4 ; 1 Cor. 2 : 9 (Rev. Version).

IN MEMORIAM. Proem.

“ Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
 Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
 By faith and faith alone embrace,
 Believing where we cannot prove.”

1 Pet. 1 : 8.

“ Thou madest life in man and brute.”

John 1 : 3.

“ For knowledge is of things we see.”

Rom. 8 : 24.

“ For merit lives from man to man,
 And not from man, O Lord, to thee.”

Ps. 143 : 2.

XXVIII.

“ Peace and goodwill to all mankind.”

Luke 2 : 14.

XXXI.

“ When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
 And home to Mary’s house returned,
 Was this demanded — if he yearned
 To hear her weeping by his grave ? ”

John 11.

XXXII.

“ She bows, she bathes the Saviour’s feet
 With costly spikenard and with tears.”

John 12 : 3.

XCVI.

“ But in the darkness and the cloud,
 As over Sinai’s peaks of old,
 While Israel made their gods of gold,
 Altho’ the trumpet blew so loud.”

Ex. 32: 1-4.

CIII.

“ The thews of Anakim.”

Deut. 2: 10.

CXX.

“ Like Paul with beasts I fought with Death.”

1 Cor. 15: 32.

CXXXI.

“ O living will that shalt endure
 When all that is shall suffer shock,
 Rise in the spiritual rock,
 Flow through our deeds and make them pure.”

1 John 2: 17; 1 Cor. 10: 4.

“ To oue that with us works.”

1 Cor. 3: 9; Phil. 2: 13.

MAUD.

I.

“ The spirit of Cain.”

1 John 3: 12.

XIII.

“ That huge scape-goat of the race.”

Lev. 16: 10.

XVIII.

(A cedar of Lebanon.) “ Thy great
 Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
 Shadowing the snow-limbed Eve.”

Gen. 2: 8; 3: 18.

THE IDYLLS OF THE KING.

THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

“ Elfin Urim.”

Ex. 28: 30.

“ Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.”

Matt. 14: 25.

“ The King will follow Christ and we the King.”

1 Cor. 11: 1.

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new.”
Rev. 21: 4-5.

GERAINT AND ENID.

“Tho’ they sought
 Through all the provinces like those of old
 That lighted on Queen Esther.”
Esther 2: 3.

“Here through the feeble twilight of this world
 Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
 That other where we see as we are seen.”
1 Cor. 13: 12.

MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

“As Love, if Love be perfect, casts out fear.”
1 John 4: 18.

“There is no being pure,
 My cherub ; saith not Holy Writ the same ?”
Rom. 3: 10.

“But neither marry nor are given
 In marriage, angels of our Lord’s report.”
Matt. 22: 30.

“The sin that practice burns into the blood,
 And not the one dark hour which brings remorse,
 Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be :
 Or else were he, the holy king whose hymns
 Are chanted in our minster, worse than all.”
2 Sam: 11.

“Seethed like the kid in its own mother’s milk.”
Ex. 23: 19.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

“His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
 And drove him into wastes and solitudes.”
Luke 8: 29.

“Since man’s first fall.”
Gen. 3: 1-6.

THE HOLY GRAIL.

“The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
 Drank at the last sad supper with his own.”
Matt. 26: 29.

“ After the day of darkness when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah.”

Matt. 27 : 53.

“ When the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change.”

Phil. 2 : 5-7.

“ Like a flying star
Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east.”

Matt. 2 : 9.

“ Arimathæan Joseph.”

Matt. 27 : 57.

“ Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself.”

Matt. 10 : 39.

“ For now there is a lion in the way.”

Prov. 22 : 13.

“ What go ye into the wilderness to see?”

Matt. 11 : 7.

“ Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last.”

John 2 : 1-10.

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.

“ That own no lust because they have no law.”

Rom. 4 : 15.

THE LAST TOURNAMENT.

“ For I have flung thee pearls and find thee swine.”

Matt. 7 : 6.

“ Fear God : honour the King.”

1 Pet. 2 : 17.

“ As the water Moab saw
Come round by the East.”

2 Kings 3 : 20-23.

“ The scorpion-worm that twists in Hell
And stings itself to everlasting death.”

Is. 66 : 24.

GUINEVERE.

“ Late, late, so late ! and dark the night and chill.”

Matt. 25 : 1.

“ So she did not see the face
Which then was as an angel's.”

Acts 6 : 15.

QUEEN MARY.

“Thou shalt not wed thy brother’s wife.’ — ‘T is written,
‘They shall be childless.’”

Lev. 20: 21.

“From thine own mouth I judge thee.”

Luke 19: 22.

“The great angel of the church.”

Rev. 2: 1.

“Whosoever
Looketh after a woman.”

Matt. 5: 28.

“They go like those old Pharisees in John
Convicted by their conscience, arrant cowards.”

John 8: 1-11.

“Not red like Iscariot’s.”

Matt. 10: 4.

“A pale horse for Death.”

Rev. 6: 8.

“Thou shalt do no murder.”

Matt. 19: 18.

“The scarlet thread of Rahab saved her life.”

Joshua 2: 18; 6: 17.

“And marked me ev’n as Cain.”

Gen. 4: 15.

“Since your Herod’s death
How oft hath Peter knocked at Mary’s gate,
And Mary would have risen and let him in;
But, Mary, there were those within the house
Who would not have it.”

Acts 12: 11-17.

“Sit benedictus fructus ventris tui.”

Luke 1: 42.

“Our little sister of the Song of Songs.”

Cant. 8: 8.

“Swept and garnished.”

Matt. 12: 44.

“The devils in the swine.”

Matt. 8: 28-32.

“Who will avenge me of mine enemies.”

Is. 1: 24.

“Open, ye everlasting gates.”

Ps. 24: 7.

“The blessed angels who rejoice
Over one saved.”

Luke 15: 10.

“The Lord who hath redeem’d us
With his own blood and wash’d us from our sins.”

Rev. 5: 9.

“Compel them to come in.”

Luke 14: 23.

“I would they were cut off
That trouble you.”

Gal. 5: 12.

“Little children,
Love one another.”

1 John 3: 18; 4: 7.

“I come not to bring peace, but a sword.”

Matt. 10: 34.

“The Church on Peter’s rock.”

Matt. 16: 18.

“Like Christ himself on Tabor.”

Matt. 17: 2.

“Ev’n St. Peter in his time of fear
Denied his Master, ay, and thrice, my Lord.”

Matt. 26: 69-74.

“His fan may thoroughly purge his floor.”

Matt. 3: 12.

“There is more joy in Heaven.”

Luke 15: 7.

“It is expedient for one man to die.”

John 11: 50.

“The penitent thief’s award
And be with Christ the Lord in Paradise.”

Luke 23: 43.

“Remember how God made the fierce fire seem
To those three children like a pleasant dew.”

Dan. 4: 20-28.

“Love of this world is hatred against God.”

James 4: 4.

“ But do you good to all
As much as in you lieth.”

Gal. 6:10.

“ How hard it is
For the rich man to enter Heaven.”

Matt. 19:23.

“ Give to the poor,
Ye give to God. Ho is with us in the poor.”

Prov. 19:17.

“ This hath offended, — this unworthy hand.”

Matt. 5:30.

“ She is none of those who loathe the honeycomb.”

Prov. 27:7.

“ And she loved much ; pray God she be forgiven.”

Luke 7:47.

HAROLD.

“ And hold their babies up to it.
I think that they would *Molochize* them too,
To have the heavens clear.”

Lev. 18:21.

“ In Heaven signs,
Signs upon earth.”

Dan. 6:27.

“ I have fought the fight and go.”

2 Tim. 4:7.

“ To the deaf adder thee, that will not dance
However wisely charm’d.”

Ps. 58:4.

“ Scape-goat.”

Lev. 16:8.

“ Fishers of men.”

Matt. 4:19.

“ Jonah.”

Jonah.

“ I have built the Lord a house.”

1 Kings 8:20.

“ Jachin and Boaz.”

1 Kings 7:21.

“Treble denial of the tongue of flesh
Like Peter’s when he fell.”

Matt. 26:69-74.

“Render unto Cæsar.”

Matt. 22:21.

“A king of men,
Not made but born, like the great King of all,
A light among the oxen.”

Luke 2:7.

“Mock-king, I am the messenger of God,
His Norman Daniel! ‘Mene, Mene, Tekel!’”

Dan. 5:25.

“There is one
“Come as Goliath came of yore.”

1 Sam. 17:40.

THE LOVER’S TALE.

“The bitterness of death.”

1 Sam. 15:32.

“A land of promise flowing with the milk
And honey of delicious memories.”

Ex. 3:8.

“Exceeding sorrow unto Death.”

Matt. 26:38.

“She took the body of my past delight,
Narded and swathed and balmed it for herself,
And laid it in a sepulchre of rock.”

John 19:39-41.

THE LOVER’S TALE. Original edition.

“So, bearing on thro’ Being limitless
The triumph of this foretaste, I had merged
Glory in glory, without sense of change.”

2 Cor. 3:18.

RIZPAH.

“Rizpah.”

2 Sam. 21:8-10.

“As the tree falls so it must lie.”

Ecc. 11:3.

“Full of compassion and mercy.”

Ps. 86:15.

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.

“Ye do it to me when ye do it to these.”

Matt. 25: 40.

“Little children should come to me.”

Matt. 19: 14.

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE.

“Not least art thou, little Bethlehem

In Judah, for in thee the Lord was born.”

Mic. 5: 2.

“Hereafter thou, fulfilling Pentecost,

Must learn to speak the tongues of all the world.”

Acts 2: 1-4.

“Thou bringest

Not peace, a sword.”

Matt. 10: 34.

“Lord, give thou power to thy two witnesses.”

Rev. 11: 3.

“Persecute the Lord,

And play the Saul that never will be Paul.”

Acts 9: 4.

“Or such crimes

As holy Paul — a shame to speak of them —

Among the heathen.”

Eph. 5: 12.

“The Gospel, the Priest’s pearl, flung down to swine.”

Matt. 7: 6.

“He that thirsteth, come and drink.”

Rev. 22: 17.

“Those three! the fourth

Was like the Son of God! Not burnt were they.”

Dan. 3: 25.

COLUMBUS.

“The crowd’s roar fell as at the ‘Peace, be still.’ ”

Mark 4: 39.

BECKET.

“Let her eat dust like the serpent, and be driven out of her Paradise.”

Gen. 3: 14.

“The Lord be judged again by Pilate.”

Matt. 27: 2.

“When murder, common
As Nature’s death, like Egypt’s plague, had filled
All things with blood, — when every doorway blushed,
Dash’d red with that unhallow’d passover.”

Ex. 7: 19; 12: 22.

“Who but the bridegroom dares to judge the bride?”

John 3: 29.

“Deal gently with the young man Absalom.”

2 Sam. 18: 5.

“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Ps. 118: 26.

“Call in the poor.”

Matt. 22: 9.

“With Cain’s answer, my Lord. Am I his keeper?”

“The Lord hath set his mark upon him that no man
should murder him.”

Gen. 4: 9-15.

“Smite the shepherd, and the sheep are scattered.”

Zech. 13: 7.

“Take heed he do not turn again and rend you.”

Matt. 7: 6.

“None other God but me.”

Ex. 20: 3.

“Nay, if they were defective as St. Peter
Denying Christ, who yet defied the tyrant,
We held by his defiance, not by his defect.”

Matt. 26: 70; Acts 4: 19.

“Yea, let a stranger spoil his heritage,
And let another take his bishoprick.”

Acts 1: 20.

“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings praise.”

Ps. 8: 2.

“Still choose Barabbas rather than the Christ.”

Matt. 27: 21.

“Thou art no prophet
Nor yet a prophet’s son.”

Amos 7: 14.

“Solomon-shaming flowers.”

Matt. 6: 29.

“If I had been Eve in the garden, I should n’t have minded the apple. For what’s an apple?”

Gen. 3 : 6.

“A whole Peter’s sheet.”

Acts 10 : 11.

“The daughter of Zion lies beside the way.”

Is. 1 : 8.

“Ay, if this if be like the Devil’s *if*,

Thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

Matt. 4 : 9.

“Thou hast trodden the winepress alone.”

Is. 63 : 3.

“These wells of Marah.”

Ex. 15 : 23.

“Give to the King the things that are the King’s,

And those of God to God.”

Matt. 22 : 21.

“The great day

When God makes up his jewels.”

Mal. 3 : 17.

“Why do the heathen rage ? ”

Ps. 2 : 1.

“Knock and it shall be opened.”

Matt. 7 : 7.

“Not tho’ it be their hour, the power of darkness.”

Luke 22 : 53.

“He is not yet ascended to the Father.”

John 20 : 17.

“At the right hand of Power

Power and great glory — for thy Church, O Lord —

Into thy hands, O Lord, into thy hands ! ”

Luke 22 : 69 ; 23 : 46.

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“As if they knew your diet spares

Whatever moved in that full sheet

Let down to Peter at his prayers.”

Acts 10 : 11.

“Grapes of Esheol hugeness.”

Num. 13: 23.

THE WRECK.

“The wages of sin is death.”

Rom. 6: 23.

“I am the Jonah; the crew should cast me into the deep.”

Jonah 1: 15.

DESPAIR.

“He is only a cloud and a smoke who was once a pillar of fire.”

Ex. 13: 21.

“Till the sun and moon of our Science are both of them turned into blood.”

Joel 2: 31.

THE FLIGHT.

“The godless Jephtha vows his child . . .
To one cast of the dice.”

Judges 11: 30.

BALIN AND BALAN.

“The Lost one Found was greeted as in Heaven.”

Luke 15: 32.

“Arimathæan Joseph.”

Mark 15: 43.

“That same spear
Wherewith the Roman pierced the side of Christ.”

John 19: 34.

“I better prize
The living dog than the dead lion.”

Eccles. 9: 4.

EARLY SPRING.

“Makes all things new.”

Rev. 21: 15.

“A Jacob’s ladder falls.”

Gen. 28: 12.

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Matt. 5 : 44.

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Matt. 2 : 2.

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John 20 : 12.

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

“Yes, tho’ the fire should run along the ground, As it once did in Egypt.”

Ex. 9 : 23.

VASTNESS.

“Innocence seethed in her mother’s milk.”

Ex. 34 : 26.

“He that has nail’d all flesh to the Cross.”

Gal. 5 : 24.

“The dead are not dead, but alive.”

Matt. 22 : 32 ; Mark 12 : 27 ; Luke 10 : 38.

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